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### RESEARCH ARTICLE

#### EVOLVING DYNAMICS OF RECRUITMENT FUNCTION IN IT INDUSTRY: EMPHASIS ON THE ROLE OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

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#### Abstract

Persistent and effective talent is a prerequisite for facing the tremendous challenges posed by the ever evolving and competitive business environment. While the companies are being pushed to innovate in regards to its recruitment strategies on one hand, the budgets to do the same continue to be snipped. Thus, companies have been seen to resort to use of information technology as a medium to source, select, recruit and place its candidates. The use of IT in recruitment is not only an economically feasible alternative but is also found to be a viable option in regards to its time effectiveness. *The objective of this paper has been to primarily understand the transformation which has taken place in regards to recruitment initiatives of corporates in general and IT firms in particular. Further, the focus of the study has been to gain relevant insights pertaining to the current status of technology adoption in the recruitment domain of IT firms. The significant findings from the study were that there has been a definite shift in Human Resource Management architecture. It has witnessed a thorough changeover from being merely an administrative job to today contributing towards the strategic business objectives of the firm. The adoption of information technology has reduced the overall workload of HR personnel thereby enabling them to redirect their energies towards tactical decision making. Firms have been seen shifting towards adoption of E-recruitment drives in order to differentiate their market standing in regards to the available talent pool. Even though organizations continue to witness certain resentment in terms of completely adapting to system based HR functions, stakeholders at different levels are slowly realizing the value add due to such an initiative and are thus effectively contributing towards smoother transition of the same.*

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#### Objectives:-

1. To study the traditional and modern recruitment function.
2. To understand recruitment process in IT Industry.
3. To gauge the impact of Information Technology (IT) on recruitment function.

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**Introduction:-**

Information Technology essentially refers to a process that is developed for storing, processing and transfer of data. The advent of massive transformations with regards to information technology is an evident result of rapid globalization observed during the turn of the century. The IT industry has thus undoubtedly become one of the most dynamic industries in every country. Since, it is seen to contribute heavily to the overall revenue of any country, its prime emphasis is always on enhancing productivity to the maximum extent possible. To achieve this objective, it continues to lay focus on the quality of its human resources. Due to the very same reason, there has been an evident shift in the role of HR department in an IT firm. From being merely a support function, it is today recognized as a strategic business partner, indirectly contributing to the bottom line revenues of the firm. The way in which human resource functions are carried out has seen a drastic transformation in the recent years. Human Resource activities are now broadly categorized as-

Transactional - Involving activities such as pay roll information, administration of employee benefits, etc.

Traditional - This involves the basic HR function of recruitment, selection, training and development, performance appraisal and rewards and recognition.

Transformational - These include activities that bring certain value addition such as developing innovation as an inherent culture in an organization.

Emphasizing particularly on the Recruitment function of HR, it is the process of finding and hiring the best qualified candidate for a job in a timely and a cost effective manner. Recruitment by way of information technology has led to coining of a new term called E-recruitment which is the process of recruitment through the internet. This has definitely sped up the process of competency mapping and subsequent matching of the candidates with the specific job profiles and its requirements. Also, posting jobs online through search engines allow employers to constantly be updated about the fresh talent available in the market.

Another advantage of E-recruitment is its ability to reduce the overall cost of recruitment, e.g.-postal cost, announcement cost, etc. In a recent survey, it was declared that E-recruitment helps reduce 75% of the traditional recruitment cost. It also helps in shortening the recruitment process by twelve days on an average. With such advantages coming into picture, a number of E-recruitment tools such as, IT blogs, Virtual World, Identity Management websites have been developed and utilized across organizations. (Jain, 2014) Information Technology facilitates the organization to make changes and improve its structures, processes and systems. It serves as its back-end-support mechanism. It has thus been proved umpteen number of times that Information Technology can act as a strong pillar of support to the Human Resource function in an organization.

In this review paper, emphasis has been laid on the role of IT in transforming the traditional HR activities, specifically in relation to recruitment strategies followed in the IT industry. In addition, it is has been endeavored to evaluate the pros and cons of amalgamating information technology under the overall ambit of HR's transformation journey towards becoming a strategic business partner.

**Discussion:-**

In the past decade, the business world at large has undergone a significant change. With the key focus on *strategic growth*, businesses today are witnessing rampant change, both in terms of its organization structure as well as its management pattern. To keep pace with these vagaries, effective management of human resources has become a very crucial contributing factor for the success of any firm. (Long, 2009) In order to create the requisite market standing, the pressure today is more in terms of owning high quality human resources than merely distributing differentiated products in the market. Thus, the firms are concentrating on strategically utilizing and managing its personnel at all levels, thereby building and sustaining competitive advantage over its peers. (Kay, 2000)

With this objective in mind, there is a pestering need to divert attention from the traditional Human Resource Management practices to new HRM practices wherein the team continuously focuses on delivering services in alignment with the strategic goals of the company. This in turn has resulted in enhanced expectations from human resource professionals specifically in terms of their contribution towards value adding initiatives within the firm. (Ettinger, 2009)

On the other hand, companies today are also particularly interested in adopting and implementing Information Technology tools across the board. The prime motive behind this desire to adapt to modern IT tools and technologies is to cut down on cost, achieve effectiveness in workplace and thereby improve the overall service quality. The ubiquity of internet is increasing by the day and hence there is a definite shift in the overall job content which is now seen to be more knowledge oriented than just being manual/labor specific. Further, IT tools are being employed extensively to augment routine procedures and consequently achieving the set targets in a shorter time span. (Fitzgerald, 2009)

This dissemination of Internet and technology use has widespread implications across different departments in the organizations. Human Resource function is no exception to this. There are multitude arenas in which technology has impacted the HR function. For example, there is tremendous pressure on HR to attract and retain the best talent in the industry. HR has been constantly endeavoring to do the very same by adopting various innovative techniques to differentiate its brand in the market space. Effective advertising using technology has been a crucial contributor to this effort. Another domain where technology has played a significant role is training and development. (Mamoudou, 2014)

E-Learning has been successfully adopted by certain big names in the industry like IBM Corporation and General Motors Corporation. Online Training has resulted in humungous cost savings for these firms thereby adding on to their bottom line revenues.

The amalgamation of technology and Human Resource function has also simplified the job of a HR professional to quite an extent. Real time availability of databases for ready reference, has enabled the HR personnel to focus their attention on analyzing existent records to strategically plan the career path of its employees. Another favorable effect of technology has been the ease of communication, which has in turn given substantial autonomy to HR professionals in their routine jobs. (Cappelli, 2001)

On the reporting front, certain potent tools such as Decision Support System (DSS), Online Analytical Process (OAP), have resulted in timely and quick decision making by HR professionals. Data crunching capabilities have been enhanced due to such tools, which in turn enable the HR team to generate crucial reports for analysis at the executive level. (Khera, 2012)

Now, if we talk from the Recruitment perspective specifically, we are aware that conventionally the organizations used newspaper advertisements and in-house employee referrals as major sources to attract candidates for job postings. Today, we see an evident shift from these traditional sources to certain modern means of employee selection, recruitment and placement. Social Media sites like Facebook, LinkedIn and various e-recruitment portals like Naukri.com, Monster India and Timesjobs.com are extensively used by both employees and employers to hunt for information about both jobs and job seekers. It is infact argued that, such modes of online recruiting have been a *catalyst* in promoting use of internet in other facets of HR as well. (Ramanujam, 2012) A very constructive use of online job postings is that the resumes are received in an electronic format which enable the HR team to proficiently track its candidate pool by stocking, sharing and recording resumes. This is further used to statistically analyze the accrued costs of the entire hiring process as well as the turnaround time for filling each position.

Another very interesting implication of the process is that this mode of recruitment facilitates companies to target a wider pool of talent by not staying restricted to a particular geography only. However, it is a common perception that the use of internet can sometimes also turn out to be punitive, if the authenticity and repute of the websites being used is not validated before use. Another challenge faced by HR professionals is that due to the wide access and ease of use of internet today, there is often an overload of resumes received as compared to the actual requirement for a position. (Wang, 2006)

Post the initial shortlisting, resumes are further screened with the use of smart screening software, which, simply exclude the resumes which do not include certain pre-fed key words. While this is a very advantageous tool in terms of niching down from the vast amount of applications received, a lot of people try to manipulate the entire process by including the buzzwords in their resume thereby making it through the screening process. Also, certain HR professionals have been seen to use technology to conduct online assessments as part of the selection process. While this technique helps generate instantaneous results thereby resulting in lower overall costs, the validity of the tool is again questionable to a certain extent. (Adewoye, 2012)

Videoconferencing is another widely used tool for conducting preliminary interviews online. Given the current rate of advancement in technology, it is known to be one of the most cost effective tool for gauging employee behavior before the actual personal interview is conducted. (Gulati, 2012)

Given the above backdrop, we can see that there is a definite inclination of firms today to resort to the aid of technology for its recruitment activities. However, HR is still seen to be plodding carefully on this path and prefers a personal touch while making its recruitment decisions.

Therefore, even though the use of information technology as part of the recruitment drives within a firm, has a lot to offer on the platter, specifically in terms of its time viability and economic feasibility, its actual contribution and adaptability is still debatable. (Nielson, 2002)

Now, when we talk of adopting technology as a crucial part of the HR business functions, the industry vertical which is seen to be adapting to this transition most comfortably is that of the IT sector. Since, the very core of an IT firm is the use of software and modern tools and technologies to keep abreast with the dynamic business environment, the inclination of these firms to resort to real time strategic processes is a commonly observed phenomenon.

When a case based analysis of certain IT firms was done, it was observed that since majority of the IT firms have a project based work culture, a lot of emphasis is laid on handling talent through the use of information technology. A lot of dependence is on managing the sourcing procedure, right from the application stage to the final stage of fitment of an employee for the identified position. To fill in the job positions created due to the dynamic requirements of the on-going projects, information technology is particularly used in regards to transitory recruitment. (Anderson, 2003)

However, one of the major challenges faced is in responding to the periodic resource requests with maximum accuracy and minimal cost. Also, the time gap incurred between the conversions from sourcing to placement needs to be minimum.

To quote a few examples, let us first see the case of *Microsoft*, a large multinational corporation, which resorted to the use of information technology to devise its recruitment strategies. Realizing the threat that it faced from its competitors in the market, this computer giant was forced to rethink on its approach towards recruitment. In contrast to a website which was overloaded with data, Microsoft today has a smart Career site, enabling a distinguished user experience for the aspiring job candidates. The site is not only a central repository for global recruitment at Microsoft, but also acts as a one stop solution for all the queries pertaining to working in the firm. Further, the firm has also been working towards restructuring its *employer branding* strategies with the aid of modern technology. It has also successfully made its online presence felt to a considerable extent through social media platforms such as Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter. In terms of monetary benefits, Microsoft saved up to £60,000 on recruitment cost by niching down on expert skill sets, through profile hunting on LinkedIn.

Another firm which was seen shifting towards adoption of effective use of information technology for making recruitment related decisions, is *Google*. Known for its innovative practices, the firm decided to develop an algorithm to determine the success rate of a candidate post his induction in Google. This helps in identifying the best talent pool in the industry. An initiative started way back in 2013, under the name of a project called Janus, the algorithm also examines rejected resumes in order to identify top performers which the company might have missed during the recruitment process. Another interesting contribution of the project has been the finding that conducting more than four interviews for filling a particular position actually turns out to be unproductive and hence consequently the cycle time of the hiring process was considerably reduced by the firm.

*Wipro* is another example of a tech giant which understood the competitiveness in the IT sector in terms of attracting fresh talent at a very early stage, thereby forcing them to develop an online portal for uploading resumes. An optimized search engine in essence, their recruitment portal acts as a medium to match the resumes received with the available positions within the firm. Once, an initial requirement mapping is done, the identified candidates are contacted through an online medium itself thereby reducing the recruitment related costs by a significant amount.

According to a Glassdoor Recruiting Survey, while majority of the companies are more than willing to add on to their recruitment numbers, shortage in available talent is becoming a major concern. Targeting this very need of firms, recruitment vendors have come up with innovative technology based mediums to enhance the overall recruitment efficiencies of such firms. The objective is to streamline the entire application and selection process through effectual use of technology. *iCIMS Inc.'s Social Distribution* is one such interface through which firms today are able to publicize their job openings and to engage potential candidates online. Contributing further to such initiatives, are certain major HR technology enterprises, such as, *Success Factors, Taleo Corp. and Workday Inc.*, who have developed mobile based recruiting applications, which has enabled the recruiters to connect with candidates on the go. This has been a game changer in today's scenario wherein, the probable incumbents are so heavily dependent on technology.

Another interesting innovation has been the Insights tool created by *HireVue Inc.* which helps companies get a comprehensive perspective about their recruiting decisions through the use of customizable dashboards. It also gives a perspective on the reliability of certain hiring choices of interviewers.

This clearly is indicative of the fact as to how even standalone vendors are coming up with certain interesting value propositions in regards to recruitment strategies adopted by firms.

As far as analytics and reporting is concerned, certain softwares (Business Intelligence Tools) are used effectively to generate relevant reports in order to further restructure the overall business strategy based on the trends observed.

Such reports may include evaluating cost incurred per employee hired, turnover rates and accrued costs, return on investment per position and so on. Although these reports might not culminate into cutting down the overall recruitment cost, they definitely help in getting to the forefront activities, which are either time consuming or are not impacting the bottom line revenues in any manner. Activities/initiatives thus identified, can be restructured to be more fruitful in nature.

The success or failure of IT systems, particularly in such B2B based firms, heavily depends on the ease of integration of one system to the other and subsequently the effective flow of information. To quote an example, the Performance review of an employee would be used as an input for competency mapping and acquiring the necessary talent thereon. (Borstorff, 2007)

Another very relevant implication of the use of information technology in IT firms is that it not only enables local sourcing but also helps in sourcing and staffing at the global level. Since, IT firms usually have employees working on projects with International clients, managing resources effectively is of prime importance. It is a general belief that a robust Information Technology system needs to be in place to cater to International arrangements in a real-time situation. (Jain, 2014)

Having analyzed the positives, certain challenges which are commonly faced by such firms also need to be discussed. The principal cause behind hindrance to an effective adoption of information technology is seen to be the lack of hand holding from the company's perspective for its employees during the change management process. Less emphasis is laid on training employees to efficiently handle the adoption of new or improved technology. Also, a lot of times, even though the resources may have been sufficiently equipped, the competency to merge the new technology in accordance with the conventional practices, might be a perplexing task. Thus, it is the duty of the HR managers to ensure that the end-users are made adequately comfortable and aware about the plausible use of IT in their daily work. (Seyni, 2014)

### **Recommendations:-**

Globalization has driven the need to align IT with the overall business strategy in all facets of an organization. The domain of Human Resource Management has been no exception to this rule and has infact become an integral part of driving business excellence in any industry across the board. Hence, in regards to creating additional value, better management of resources is becoming a critical differentiator for any firm today. Understanding its relevance, firms today, are seen to be associating HR business functions with technological transformations under the ambit of strategic initiatives.

Having discussed the entire spectrum of information technology and its impact on human resource functions in an organization in general and recruitment in particular, we would now like to make certain recommendations pertaining to the same.

First and foremost, when any kind of technological change is adopted across the organization, it is essential to recognize the key goal/motive behind the same. For example, for an IT organization, recruitment via the online mode could be due to the need to provide for/offer consistent and quality services in terms of human resource allocated to projects across different geographies.

The next step should be to identify certain key performance indicators, such as, cost of hiring, employee turnover rate, and time taken to fulfil a position. This would enable the firms to analyze the accomplished results vis-à-vis the desired outcomes. Such an investigation would help gauge the effectiveness of resorting to an IT enabled HR function.

Further, in order to win the *talent war* in today's competitive business environment, corporate executives, line managers and HR professionals should work in tandem and ensure that information technology proficiently influences the HR practices. There is a definite need to shift from the conventional HR practices to the modern approach of e-HR.

Organizations need to identify certain benchmark firms in their industry; trying to analyze their use of internet for resume hunting and job advertisements. This would enable firms to further enhance their current success level of e-recruitment. Also, the firms should try and widen their outlook in terms of utilizing online databases especially to fill critical job positions. Requisite balance should however be maintained in terms of using technology for sourcing applicant pool and maintaining the personal touch while screening applicants during interviews.

As pointed above, a lot of IT Corporations have successfully managed to adopt technology based recruitment process. However, an immediate implication has been the surfeit resumes, which HR professionals have been forced to accept and sift from. One probable solution of handling this issue could be by designing an overall e-recruitment plan and then incorporating a recommender system in it. This recommender system would enable the raters to vouch for certain resumes over the others based on their professional work experience with the individual in question or due to an otherwise personal experience with him/her.

It is also imperative that before any such wide scale implementation of technology is conducted in an organization, the level of preparedness is evaluated. Specific HR process proprietors should be willing and ready to adapt to the change that would now drive the business goals and objectives. Undermining the need for evaluating this readiness, could result in a comparatively less payback than what possibly could have been otherwise achieved by the exercise.

Preparing the critical participants at different levels of change management is of utmost importance. Since, there can be a lot of initial resentment when technology is adopted as a vital part of any HR function, management assurance to its employees is extremely important.

Additionally, during the entire transformation process, it is essential that the stakeholders are reminded time and again that HR as a function has to be seen more from a strategic standpoint now, than merely an administrative job. Since, managing change would be a continuous process, it is required that employees are given that extra support even post implementation until the entire transformation has been entrenched in the organization's culture.

In spite of all the probable shortcomings, it should be noted that the adoption of such streamlined systems would definitely positively influence the HR function in general and the recruitment function in particular. The basic aspect which needs to be kept in mind is that the entire strategy to implement technology as part of HR functioning, needs to be well planned, structured and phased out over a period of time. Since such an execution could be a key contributor to the HR transformation in the long run, it is imperative that there is successful acceptance of the process by all patrons, thereby enabling maximum value seized during the entire journey.

**Conclusion:-**

The use of information technology for recruitment is taking huge leaps and bounds especially in the IT sector. Certain trends have been predicted that are likely to take over this function of Human Resources by a storm as far as its overall approach is concerned. Major changes that are expected to be seen include:

**Social Media Hiring**—As of now, majority of the hiring/recruitment happens through websites such as Monster.com, Naukri.com etc. With the further impact of information technology, *recruitment would also be done through social media websites such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, etc. to find and target an even larger pool of candidates.*

For e.g. - In the present day, poaching takes place by locating people with specific skills sets through search on websites such as LinkedIn or through personal networking. Enhanced use of information technology is likely to enable poaching of required candidates through their personal accounts on Facebook as well.

**Online Video Hiring**- would also become the *most used form of recruitment* and selection. Although this mode of hiring is very much prevalent even today, it is likely to become a standalone mode of recruitment in times to come.

**Social Media Profile Verification** - In the future, whenever candidates apply for jobs online, the recruiters would be able to get an instant glimpse of their recent tweets, Facebook posts and their LinkedIn profile recommendations. This would be enabled by the *integration of applications received with various social media interfaces.*

**Increased Value Proposition** - The importance of this is increasing day-by-day and thus *effective employer branding is likely to be the real differentiating factor in the future.* This exercise if supported with proficient means of technology, is likely to help the HR professionals contact and engage a large pool of highly talented prospects. This in turn would enable the organization to grow further by strengthening their foothold in the market space.

**How Technology is likely to Kill Jobs** - Although the information technology industry is India's largest job creator, its pace in recruitment is estimated to slow down, putting the entire blame on technology for making many job profiles redundant. Indian Information Technology firm NASSCOM, is predicting a decrease in its job offerings by 13% in the financial year 2016 while InfoTech plans to reduce it by 5%-10%. Cognizant India, although plans to continue as a net hirer but its pace in recruitment is likely to decrease. With the *IT industry continuously incorporating technology and automation in its work culture*, where once, one man could assist ten customers, now one man can serve fifty customers, thereby augmenting the overall productivity levels. As an obvious outcome of this, the overall manpower requirement to do the same old jobs, has reduced.

**Cloud Computing and Recruitment** - Companies are now focusing on expertise such as artificial intelligence and cloud computing. In this particular context, it is basically the process of using databases and modern softwares for the purpose of recruitment. Such extremely potent tools in the field of recruitment, help in providing data/information as soon as desired, without finding a need to store it (real time). When it comes to sourcing the right candidate, a platform called '*private cloud*' aids in creating a common job portal for job postings and other critical information about potential hires. This one source is then further used for tracking, measuring and reporting data pertaining to potential recruits. It is easily implementable/accessible and can thus start running efficiently within a few weeks, thereby making it easier for companies to adopt it on a large scale.

These softwares have an open Application Programming Interface, which increases smooth communication amongst various systems for exchange of information. Such customized applications and solutions definitely help companies in achieving larger business goals. Thus, *cloud based recruitment is likely to be the new face of recruitment in the near future making it the most used method of sourcing potential employees.*

*The study was limited to the IT industry* in particular and hence there is a definite scope for future research in other industries as well, given that human resources are assets for any organization, regardless of its sector. Also, the variables under study were restricted to information technology and its impact on recruitment strategies. To broaden the spectrum of study, another facet of Human Resource function could be considered for further analysis. Example – HRIT and its impact on Manpower Planning.

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