

Innovative Inductions

India Inc is bringing into play theatre workshops, ice-breaking sessions, quizzes, multicultural exposure, treasure hunt exercises and knowledge-sharing sessions with domain experts, to make its brand new employees learn the ropes

SHREYA BISWAS, MAHIMA PURI & DEVINA SENGUPTA NEW DELHI | BANGALORE

Aditi Gupta is a new joinee in the marketing function at Yes Bank. Few weeks back, at the time of joining her new job, she expected heavily-jargoned sessions from various business heads as part of her induction. To her surprise, she was greeted with drum-beating sessions and a treasure hunt. "The fun and informative ways of learning about the bank were amazing. While the Drum Café proved a stress buster for many like me, other activities ensured there was high level of engagement from all," Gupta says. More and more companies are putting in place innovative methods to induct new joinees. It is about theatre workshops, bonding over social networks, lessons in team building, ice-breaking sessions in the form of quizzes and informal interactions; induction of trainees at regional and global level for multicultural exposure; and knowledge-sharing sessions with domain experts. Says Rajiv Krishnan, Market Business Leader, Mercer's Human Capital Services, "The transition from academics to workplace is a big leap. Often at the time of induction, team work is emphasised as this would be the first time that many of the new recruits—especially those from engineering colleges—will work in teams as opposed to individual work earlier." The new joinees are also exposed to the right form of corporate behaviour and therefore these programmes are skillfully designed and intensive. In sectors like the IT, where time-to-productivity is measured for a new recruit resourceful, a good induction and training can help reduce the time lag, says Krishnan.

Learning is Fun

So this year, while inducting a batch of 173 B-school graduates, Yes Bank decided to add experiential learning through various activities, rather than merely focusing on PPTs and lectures on organisational culture, etiquettes and opportunities. The bank called it Yes Premier League. On Drum Café, the Bank's president (Human Capital Management) Deodutta Kurane says the exercise, although may seem fun, was to develop a sense of belonging among the new joinees and towards the organisation. In another fun initiative Y-Treasure Hunt, the entire batch was divided into 20 groups and a contest was held. All the teams were sent to various Yes Bank branches in Mumbai. The idea was to make them understand about the bank and its functions. Each time they found a new clue they could move on to the next step. For instance, once at the branch, they would find clues to get a pitch, which would lead them to potential customers in that area. The team that got maximum leads won the contest. "When you put people through experiential learning, they tend to learn and absorb more and faster," Kurane says.

Bonding Over Theatre

At NTPC, induction is serious business. The one-year programme takes them through six months each of classroom and on-the-job training with several initiatives to make them bond together such as two-week theatre workshop by the National School of Drama. "It's a lot of learning and a lot of fun as well for those who are keen to learn new things," says S P Singh, HR director, NTPC. For the first six months, they get trained in a classroom for technical exposure followed by an exchange training at the equipment manufacturers plant for a month. Inductees also go through rotation to understand the various departments. However, this shouldn't make you think NTPC is all about serious work. "We do a lot of fun things such as NSD theatre workshops, cultural programmes and dinners hosted by the CMD," says A C Chaturvedi, executive director, Power Management Institute. GETs, or graduate engineer trainees as they are called, participate in workshops and stage dramas on various issues. This works as an ice breaker. "They come from different parts of the country; it helps them open up," he adds. The company is inducting 470 GETs this year. As a new initiative, the company launched a page on the Facebook last year.

Go Global

This year, at Boston Consulting Group's (BCG) India office, some 80 new joinees, MBAs from IIMs, ISB and graduates from IITs and other institutes, will go through a layered induction programme. It spans the local induction which first takes care of their logistics and other basics followed by 1-3 months of on-the-job training with a live case study. BCG conducts a workshop for three days for the new joinees where the partners encourage new joinees to ask questions on various things such as work planning, slide writing, using excel sheets, story-lining, and creating a presentation. "It might seem simple and basic but you realise it's extremely handy when you start working," says Parul Bajaj, 25, consultant who joined the company two years ago. The last leg of the programme is conducted with a gap of 3-4 months called the regional orientation programme that gets together new joinees in a country from different parts of the continent to interact with each other over a project and various informal dinners. "We have 5-6 standardised projects, a set of case studies on which they work. We keep on evolving them. This

makes the programme uniform at our offices in 80 countries,” says Ashish Garg, partner and director, BCG. “The one-week training is a fun thing as the case studies are quite recent. You get to learn a lot. Also, you have the opportunity to know your colleagues from different parts of the world, it’s a great add-on. It not only helps professionally, but personally as well because you get to make friends,” says Bajaj who had her regional induction at Kuala Lumpur.

Walking the Talk

In July last year, NIIT launched a new programme – JumpStart @ NIIT. The objective was to make sure every new joinee goes through the same induction process across the country. “Our induction programmes were de-centralised earlier. We wanted to ensure that a standardised and centralised format is followed across NIIT,” says Shampi Venkatesh, chief people officer at NIIT. Manu Ashok, who joined NIIT in March this year as product manager- design and individual learning solutions, has a favourite initiative called Baby’s Day Out. Within a month of joining, the new NIITian had an informal chat with his senior manager, who explained Mobility Maps or his career path and growth in the organisation. “It is both inspirational and aspirational to see that the company has a career path for you in place. If you do well, you know exactly when you can reach the next level,” she adds. The company has made JumpStart more informative and interactive which was not the case earlier. In Shampi’s words, the earlier Induction had a lot of presentations about the company, which resulted in ‘information overload’. Now, there are ice-breaking sessions and videos along with interaction with the peers and seniors. “Now, we have a new structure, which ensures candidates interact with senior leaders right from the beginning, understand the organisation and its functions more effectively and more importantly, have a clear understanding of their own roles,” Venkatesh adds. Interaction is big at Mphasis too. At the Bangalore-based ITeS firm, around 500 new employees will go through intensive training this year. One of the critical parts of the training is interactions with domain experts and vertical heads, according to Usha Subramanian, VP and Head of Technical Domain and Learning at Mphasis. It’s a win-win for all. Says NIIT’s Manu: “The ice-breaking sessions had some quizzes and interactions that allowed us to attain a comfort level with peers and seniors. Asking queries was encouraged, which made one feel connected to the organisation from day one.”

shreya.biswas@timesgroup.com **talking heads**



We tell new hires upfront about the training they will undergo. It’s a lot of learning and a lot of fun as well for those who are keen to learn new things **S P SINGH HR Director, NTPC**



Earlier inductions had an ‘information overload’. Now, there are ice-breaking sessions and videos along with interaction with peers and seniors **SHAMPI VENKATESH Chief People Officer, NIIT**



ACT 1: New joinees of NTPC attending a theatre workshop by National School of Drama



ICE BREAKERS: (Top) A drum-playing session organised at Yes Bank during the induction programme. (Bottom) Boston Consulting Group holding an interactive team-building session for its new recruits