

6 INTUIT TECHNOLOGY

Industry: **IT** Employees: **224**

Workplace locations: **1** Business units: **1**

Unique roles: **16**

A WORK culture that answers to customers is Intuit's "secret sauce", says Managing Director Vijay Anand. "Engineers, typically, never get to connect directly with customers. They sit in their cubicles and come up with cool products they think people will want. Unfortunately, it doesn't always work that way," he says.

So, Intuit teaches its engineers to follow their customers—that is, meet prospective users of their products, at their workplace (small enterprises like a tailor shop, a local *kirana* store, a beauty salon, a welding shop, a farming field). The objective is to see their pain points first-hand, and then design products that provide a soothing effect.

Typically, 10-15% of the work time of engineers is left free for them to follow the customer home,



INTUIT: Engineers get 10-15% of their work time off to connect with people outside and solve problems—all in search of the next new product. This is her big smile of freedom.



NILOPAL BARUJAH

connect with the outside world and solve real-time problems that have the potential to become the next big Intuit product. Unstructured time, it's termed. "This free time is not monitored—you are free to do as you please," says an employee.

Engineers don't have to wait endlessly to see their ideas take shape—it can take just six weeks for an idea to move into the prototype stage. UVG Sekar, Head, Human Resources, says Intuit helps engineers hone their entrepreneurial skills, be it the ability to take risks, the passion for an idea, taking an idea to fruition or customer orientation. Products like TurboTax, the number one tax preparation software in the US, and QuickBooks, the number one business accounting software for small enterprises, are outcomes of such support systems.

This open culture requires active participation

by senior management. The company is proud of this culture—senior managers are often found lounging around with employees, discussing ideas and strategies. Access to senior management is actively encouraged—Founder & Chairman Scott Cook himself conducts a few training sessions for employees every year. All this makes it a satisfying experience for employees, who vote with their mouths—30-40% of lateral hiring in the company is through employee referrals.

—Nandita Datta

7 EUREKA FORBES

Industry: **Consumer durables** Employees: **9,400**

Workplace locations: **243** Business units: **4**

Unique roles: **106**

AT EUREKA Forbes, employees who have put in two years in the company are eligible to contest an in-house election for 'councillors' and 'senators'. In 2008, 270 candidates contested for 56 seats (42 councillors and 14 senators); they even drafted their own manifestos, and articulated plans to develop their 'constituencies'. All employees cast their votes through a secret ballot to elect the 'house of Eurochamps'. Councillors meet once a month, the senate once a quarter, to address employee issues. "The idea is to ensure the voice of our people is heard in the decision-making process," says Suresh Goklaney, Vice-Chairman & Managing Director, Eureka Forbes: "The concept has helped us eliminate barriers in the flow of knowledge and communication across hierarchies."

For a direct-selling company like Eureka Forbes, employees are its single biggest asset. The company looks to take people with average educational qualifications and turn them into performers through a mix of training and performance-based incentives. The company runs an induction programme for newcomers and a refresher course for front-line employees. In 2000, Eureka Forbes tied up with Narsee Monjee Institute of Management and Higher Studies, and floated an academy to offer management diploma courses to its employees. The academy is still active. The company is now planning to team up with premier B-Schools to co-develop sales-centric training programmes.

Succession planning is also a critical item on the company's agenda. It is working on a programme that will help it spot potential managers and mould them for bigger roles. So, a front-line sales person can grow to become a Vice-President.

Eureka Forbes, says Goklaney, is highly performance-driven. "Compensation at all levels is performance-linked and the variable component varies from 40-60%," he says. However, attrition is high. "Although it is 4% at senior levels, it is 30% at the front-line," says Harsimran Singh, Senior Vice-President-Human Resources & Organisational Effectiveness. Still, she says, there's a silver



PRIVAM DHAR

lining to this high rate of attrition: "It helps to align the employee base with regular performers." And that helps the business—and, in turn, the people who run it.

—Rajiv Bhuvra

8 LG ELECTRONICS

Industry: **Consumer durables** Employees: **3,000**

Workplace locations: **41** Business units: **1**

Unique roles: **417**

THE PREMISE for HR at LG is if the company takes care of its employees, its performance will improve. Yet, just five years ago, LG India was losing 35% of freshers within a year of them joining the company. That number is now down to 5% and not one employee earmarked as core talent or in the successor group has left in the last one year.

Behind this turnaround is a change in the basis of expectations from employees and the way they engage with the company. Activities were introduced and processes were reoriented towards increasing inter- and intra-departmental interaction, promoting fun at work, providing instant recognition and improving work-life balance. LG was considered a tough place to work, especially at the branch level. People were slogging even on Sundays to meet targets. This workaholicism ended when the HR imposed a blanket ban on employees working on Sundays. Initially, workers accustomed to chasing targets at the expense of personal lives still flouted the diktat, but HR followed through—they called

up employee homes on Sundays and holidays to confirm that employees were not working.

Touches like this make Dr Yasho V Verma, Director (HR and Marketing Sales), LG, say: "On paper, every HR team is strong, it is implementation that matters." Small things, like the 30-minute free-wheeling session with the boss, count. Team leaders managing less than 15 people have to do this once a month; those managing more than 15 people, once in two months. They also have to take their team out every month, at the company's expense. The bonding and interaction improves trust and team spirit, and creates a better working environment. After these measures were introduced, late sitting in the office reduced by about 80%.

A similar concept exists at the blue-collar worker level too. An HR person takes line guardianship of 30-40 employees, and meets them once a month for at least 15-20 minutes to hear them out and understand their mindset. The onus of resolving employee issues lies with the HR person, and processes in place make them accountable.

For employees, professional growth is important. So, the HR team prepares a five-year plan for employees based on a three-day workshop with them, where behavioural and functional capabilities are assessed. A clear training plan is drawn up on how to achieve the goals. Two months back, this programme covered 1,250 employees. Every month, 40 more employees are added, with the eventual objective of covering all 3,400 employees at LG. Verma sees HR people as "psychologists" who can read employee minds and take quick action. LG's numbers show they have been doing that.

—Anurag Prasad



EUREKA FORBES: The company is run like a democracy, elections included. Employees elect senators and councillors to represent their voice in the management's decision-making process.

