

HUL is leveraging a motivated workforce for growth advantages; here's how

For HUL, a motivated workforce leads to multiple advantages and the consumer giant is banking on that to bolster growth

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Anuradha Razdan, ED (HR) and CHRO, HUL & Unilever South Asia

The first thing that a chuffed Anuradha Razdan tells you is that she has completed 25 years at FMCG major Hindustan Unilever Ltd (HUL). She passed out from the prestigious XLRI in Jamshedpur in 1999 and joined HUL as a management trainee. She has been there since. And to be fair to Razdan, a steady career path has helped her a great deal. In these years, she has grown from a management trainee to Executive Director (HR) and CHRO, HUL & Unilever South Asia. And since we met her in late April, it has been announced that she would now move to a global role as Unilever's Chief Reward & Organisation Development Officer.

“The enduring parts of our culture have not changed and one of that is to be boringly consistent,” she says. HUL is a very large organisation (it ended FY24 with a revenue of ₹62,707 crore and a net profit of ₹10,282 crore), and has an enviable set of brands under its umbrella. According to Razdan, HUL is an employer of choice at the Top 20 B-school campuses in India. “People want to be a part of a winning business, and we’re one,” she says proudly.

Moving a monolith is not easy but HUL, time and again, has shown how it can be done. Razdan speaks of innovation with its marketing models, supply chain, and distribution. “We set the trend and constantly create a leadership factory,” she explains. It cannot be forgotten that talent today is very different from, say, a decade ago and job options have increased quite dramatically, forcing any organisation to up its game all the time. “For us the process of talent attraction is serious business, and we spend a lot of time on that. If we get it right there, a lot of things fall into place.”

4 HUL TOP ATTRIBUTES

- **FAIR AND OBJECTIVE PROCESSES AND POLICIES**
 - **GROWTH AND LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES**
 - **JOB SECURITY AND STABILITY**
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◀ **FLEXIBILITY FOCUSED** Anuradha Razdan,
ED (HR) and CHRO, HUL & Unilever South Asia

In the last decade or so, the FMCG industry has undergone significant disruptions, largely propelled by technology. Traditional consumer purchasing behaviours, like in-store shopping, have shifted towards a situation where both the offline purchase and

online ordering can coexist together. In the face of such change, Razdan says that what remains unchanged is HUL's dedication to skill-building, despite the unprecedented business transformation underway.

"Just look at the spectrum that covers general trade, modern trade, and e-commerce. The opportunity is to make the organisation future-ready, and we will do that by upskilling our people across levels," she says. Apart from upskilling, Razdan says that a key aspect of leadership grooming is also dependent upon the work culture. And HUL prides itself in being an open and nurturing space. Also, working for a large multinational has its own advantages and being relocated to different markets is one. "The international experience is of great importance and a key part of the overall leadership grooming process," she says.

Similarly, HUL prides itself in being a gender-diverse organisation. According to Razdan, women account for 46.5% of managerial positions. That number was just 4% in 1999. And like its multiple businesses, there are many layers to HUL. This March, the company introduced the foster/kinship caregiver leave policy.

"By pioneering this initiative, we aim to create a supportive ecosystem that values all forms of caregiving," says Razdan. In addition to offering a range of parental support options—parental leave, adoption leave, secondary caregiver leave—the recent initiative is "a step forward to ensure caregivers for foster children or kinship can balance their professional responsibilities with their caregiving duties".

Key HR initiatives

▶ HUL's Open2U is a platform that gives expert talent and gig workers an opportunity to work on strategic projects, but with the security of a full-time job. The company uses this policy to get experts for special projects on a short-term basis

▶ Under U-Work, HUL employees don't have one single

role. They are part of diverse assignments and also enjoy the freedom to pursue personal endeavours between projects. They also receive a monthly retainer

▶ HUL has a foster/kinship caregiver leave policy, with the aim to prioritise all forms of caregiving, without making a distinction. Under

this, employees who are caregivers for foster children or kinship have a range of support systems available

▶ HUL, which has witnessed the FMCG market grow and change drastically, also has robust skill-building and reskilling avenues available for its employees

In line with making jobs flexible, both in terms of schedule and place of work, HUL has two policies: Open2U and U-Work. Open2U is a platform that allows expert talent/gig workers the opportunity to work on strategic projects with the security and benefits of a full-time job. "We primarily use this to get experts in for special projects on a short-term basis," she explains.

In the case of U-Work, HUL employees enjoy the best of both worlds: the autonomy of contract positions paired with the stability and perks commonly found in traditional employment. Under this, individuals aren't confined to a single role; they engage in diverse assignments and enjoy the freedom to pursue personal endeavours between projects. Regardless of their current workload, they receive a monthly retainer along with a tailored package of benefits.

HUL, which has consistently been among the top names in BT-Taggd's The Best Companies to Work For in India lists, remains a coveted destination for aspiring managers. But, it doesn't dwell on past success. In an ever-evolving market, strategic refinement is crucial. Central to this evolution is cultivating a positive work culture—essential for sustained growth.

And HUL aims to underscore this vital message. "We need to be viewed as a company that not just does well but does good too," says Razdan.