

Process Based role Analysis and Design:



ABSTRACT

The paper deals with how to make organizational roles effective through systematic analysis and design of roles based on business processes served by the role. Development and application of Process Based Role Analysis and Design (PROBRAD), a practical organization development intervention, has been described. The intervention focuses on enhancing role effectiveness while attaining a comprehensive organizational alignment. Application of PROBRAD in an international information technology industry for the role of a country manager resulted in expanding the role beyond marketing and sales, revealing the weakness of processes and policies in the company, and clarifying the new expanded role of the country manager. The new role design comprising the role mission, role expectations, critical attributes, and behavioral norms, realized through the application of PROBRAD, can enable information technology industries to get the best from the role of a country manager and facilitate introduction of progressive human resource management.

Keywords: *Organizational Roles, Role Effectiveness, Role Analysis, OD Interventions, IT Industry*

Application in information Technology Industry

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INTRODUCTION

The present era is characterized by liberalization of economy and globalization of industries. Organizations are facing constant pressures for enhancing their performance. Employees are required to perform at their best in their assigned jobs. Lack of clarity of job requirements has always been a major problem for job holders. A reasonable performance on the job cannot be attained unless the job requirements are clear to the job holder. The classical method of describing the job by writing *Job Descriptions* for clarifying the job requirements, however, suffers from inadequacies.

Job descriptions do not take care of several operational aspects of the job (Sayles, 1964); they are limited to the static aspects of the job and do not consider the dynamics of relationships with other related jobs. Knowledge of one's own job is necessary but not sufficient to ensure good performance on the job. For ensuring good job performance, it is necessary to understand how other related job holders are contributing to one's own job performance. As a result, most job descriptions remain as mere documents on record and do not get operationalized.

Role Theory (Biddle, 1986) throws new light on enhancing individual and organizational performance. It assumes that people define roles for themselves and for others based on their social learning (Bandura, 1971). They develop expectations from roles played by them and roles played by others. People influence others to fulfill expectations they have from others' roles. They act in their roles to fulfill others' expectations from their roles. Role theory focuses on the roles played by the individuals in their organizations to explain the interactions among individuals in their respective organizations. Role behavior is influenced by expectations for appropriate behavior in that role (Thompson, 2001). According to Barker (1999), individual behavior is influenced by social positions held by the individuals concerned and the expectations linked to those positions. Change in role behavior comes through an iterative process of role sending (or conveying role expectations to the role occupant in a covert or overt manner) and role receiving (or accepting role expectations conveyed, fully or partly) (Thompson, 2001).

Human behavior in organizations is generally studied at three levels, viz., individuals, groups, and organization as a whole. Role theory justifies that study of human behavior in organizations is also required at the fourth level of

Organizational Roles (Krantz and Maltz, 1997). Organizational roles significantly influence role occupant's behavior not only in the organizational context but also in extra-organizational context (Dobrev and Barnett, 2005). The concept of *Organizational Role* (Pareek, 1993) is very important for understanding and factoring in the dynamics of relationship of a job with its related jobs. An organizational role is defined by the expectations which significant people in the organization have from the role in question (or the focal role). These significant people are *Role Senders* (Merton, 1957) for the focal role and determine how it should function. The occupant of the focal role also has expectations from his/her role and functions as a role sender. Unlike a job, an organizational role is a relational concept based on mutual obligations between the focal role and its connected roles. Organizational roles take into account the dynamics of relationships that exist between the focal role and its connected roles. Clarifying the role means defining the role expectations, considering the dynamics of the role with its connected roles.

Role based interventions (Dayal and Thomas, 1968; Harrison, 1972; Pareek, 1987; Pestonjee and Pandey, 1996; Pareek, 1998; Rao and Vijayalakshmi, 2000) give due consideration to the dynamics of relationship that the focal role has with its connected roles. Hence they have a greater potential to be more effective. They are important in the field of Organization Development (OD) (Beckhard, 1969) because they are better suited for enhancing individual and organizational effectiveness. Development and application of *Process Based Role Analysis and Design* (PROBRAD), a practical role based OD intervention, has been described in this paper. The paper has been organized in seven parts. The first part of the paper furnished above presents an introduction, bringing out the limitations of conventional job descriptions and the need for substituting job description with role clarification. The second part explains the techniques for role clarification. The third part describes how PROBRAD was developed. The fourth part describes the preparations to be made before a PROBRAD exercise. The fifth part explains the methodology (including the guidelines, approach and steps) for the application of PROBRAD. The sixth part illustrates the steps for the application of PROBRAD and describes the results obtained therefrom. The final part of the paper is devoted to conclusions and recommendations.



ROLE CLARIFICATION

Role Clarification (Dyer et al., 2007) is far more comprehensive than job description; it fills the void that cannot be filled by job descriptions. Role clarification model of teambuilding is

based on the fact that knowledge of how each team member complements other team-members' performance is very important for overall team effectiveness (Sims et al., 2006). Role clarification is a lot more than job description. Salas et al. (1999) have reported that interventions that emphasize role clarification lead to performance enhancement.

Three techniques have been developed for role clarification (Burke, 1995). Huse (1980) developed *Job Expectation Technique* which is particularly helpful when a new member is introduced in a team. Harrison (1972) developed *Role Negotiation Technique* which is useful when role conflicts are pronounced. Dayal and Thomas (1968) developed *Role Analysis Technique* (RAT) which is particularly suitable when there is high ambiguity in role expectations.



ROLE ANALYSIS TECHNIQUE

RAT duly considers interdependencies and mutual obligations among a set of connected roles while clarifying roles and responsibilities. RAT thus transforms job descriptions into *Role Expectations* (Dayal, 1969). Unlike job descriptions, role expectations are better understood, owned up, followed and executed by the role occupant (job holder). Basing on RAT, Pareek (1975) projected *Role Analysis* as a structured exercise for enhancing role effectiveness. Role analysis has been successfully used for role clarification in different kinds of organizations (Sarangi, 1988).



DEVELOPMENT OF PROBRAD

Role analysis not only clarifies role expectations but also identifies problems that jeopardize role performance. Srivastav (1999) proposed that role analysis should be followed by a systematic role design to address the above-mentioned problems in role performance and the opportunity should be used to do all what is necessary to enhance role effectiveness.

Organizational performance is delivered through a number of specially designed business processes (Tenner and DeToro, 1997). Each business process employs appropriate technology and people playing their assigned roles. An organizational role may serve several business processes. Performance

maximization for an organization therefore means performance maximization for its business processes and roles, together with a comprehensive organizational alignment (Powell, 1992). Comprehensive organizational alignment (Figure 1) means alignment among all the organizational components, including alignment of roles with

Alignment among Organizational Components

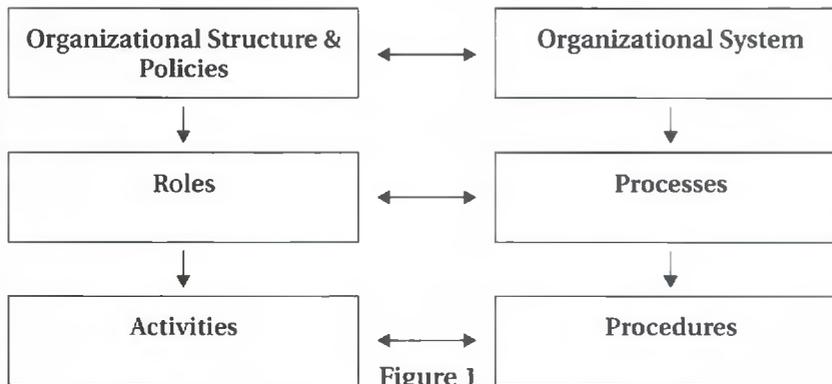


Figure 1

organizational structure and policies, activities with roles, processes with organizational system, procedures with processes, organizational system with organizational structure and policies, processes with roles, and procedures with activities.

Srivastav (2006) has proposed that analysis and design of roles should be based on business processes served by the role.

Process Based Role Analysis and Design (PROBRAD)

(Srivastav, 1999, 2006) has been developed as a practical and user-friendly intervention with a well-defined methodology for enhancing performance in organizational roles, considering the requirements of business processes served. It comprises a detailed analysis of the focal role and its systematic design/redesign to meet the following objectives.

- Maximizing role effectiveness.
- Maximizing the effectiveness of related business processes.
- Maximizing alignment with organizational components (Structure, Systems, Processes, and Procedures).



REPARATION FOR PROBRAD EXERCISE

There are certain prerequisites for conducting PROBRAD in any organization. Preparations as described below are necessary to realize of the above-mentioned objectives.

Identification of Role Set

Critical Roles (roles that are multiplied or have a major influence in the organization) are identified and prioritized for carrying out PROBRAD, so as to maximize the impact of the exercise on the organization.

Focal Role (or the role being analysed /designed/redesigned) is examined to identify its connected roles within and outside the organization (with whom the focal role interacts for his/her role performance), spanning different business processes. Focal role and its connected roles constitute the *role set* for the focal role.

Training the Role Set Members

Role Set Members (role occupants in the role set) are given comprehensive training on the following concepts as per outline presented therewith.

- **Organizational Role** - This has been explained above in the section on introduction.
- **Dynamics of Role Performance** - An organization is a network of roles (Pareek, 1993). The role occupant performs certain functions in his/her role to satisfy the expectations of significant people connected with the role. As depicted in Figure 2, an organizational role connects and interfaces the role occupant (having his/her specific personality, competence and needs) with the organization (having its specific structure, systems and processes, and goals). The quality of role design determines the quality of fit between the role occupant and his/her role. It influences the role performance. When the role is well-designed, role performance is higher and the role occupant can even have self-actualization (Kriz,2006). When the role is ill-designed, role performance is lower and the role occupant experiences high role stress.
- **Role Design** - An organizational role gets comprehensively defined by its role design comprising the following elements.
 - Role Mission: The main purpose for the existence of the role.
 - Role Set: Set of roles (within and outside the organisation) with whom the focal role needs to interact for successful role performance.
 - Role Expectations: Major deliverables as a result of successful performance in the role; these correspond with different dimensions of role performance.
 - Role Activities: A role expectation is realized when these activities are performed by the role occupant.
 - Critical Attributes: Education, knowledge, skills (technical, managerial, behavioral) and experience which are critical for successful performance in the role.
 - Behavioral Norms: Special behaviors which are desirable

for successful performance in the role.

- **Role Effectiveness** - The following dimensions need to be addressed for enhancing effectiveness (Pareek,1993) of an organizational role.
 - **Role Clarity:** Role occupants are more motivated when their role expectations are clearer to them and when they experience reduced role ambiguity.
 - **Role Alignment:** Performance by a role is maximized when the following alignments are ensured: role activities with the role expectation, role expectations with the role mission, and role mission with the mission of the processes/SBUs served (Figure 3). Further, a role also needs to be aligned (Figure 1) with the organizational structure, policies, and processes.
 - **Self-Role Integration:** Role performance is enhanced when the role occupant likes what he is required to do in his/her role. In such a case, he/she does not have any need or scope to distance himself/herself from the role and gives his/her best for the role.
 - **Development and Growth:** The role occupant feels energized when the role offers opportunities for his/her development and growth; this also prepares the role occupant for assuming higher responsibilities in the organization.
 - **Centrality and Influence:** A role can be effective if it is central to the organization and makes an impact on the performance of the organization.
 - **Role Interlinkages:** A role is effective when it has good interlinkages with its connected roles.
 - **Confrontation:** Facing problems, making genuine efforts to solve problems encountered in role performance enhances role effectiveness.

Dynamics of Role Performance

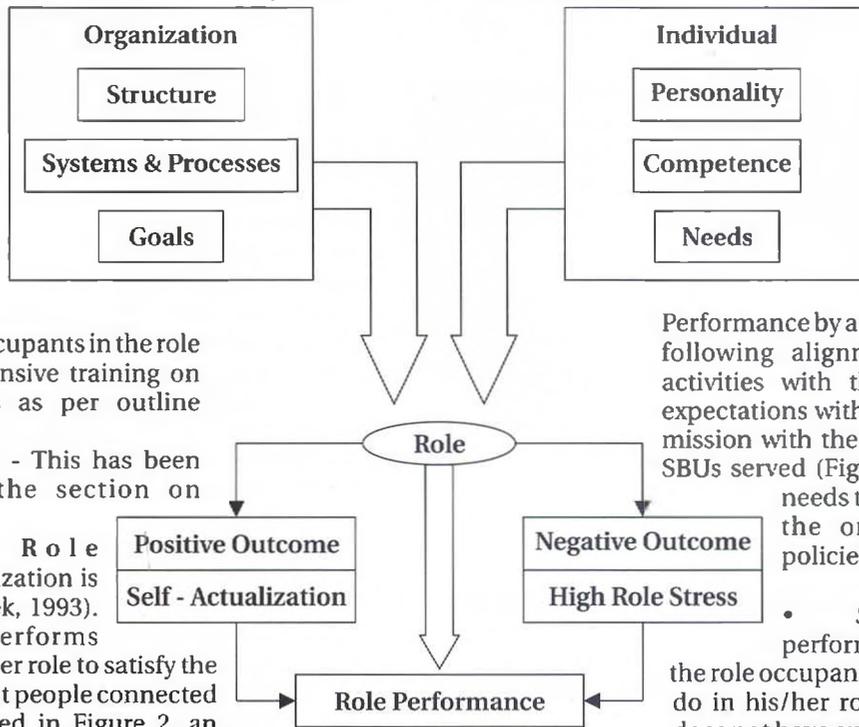


Figure 2

best for the role.

Alignment between Role and Company Mission

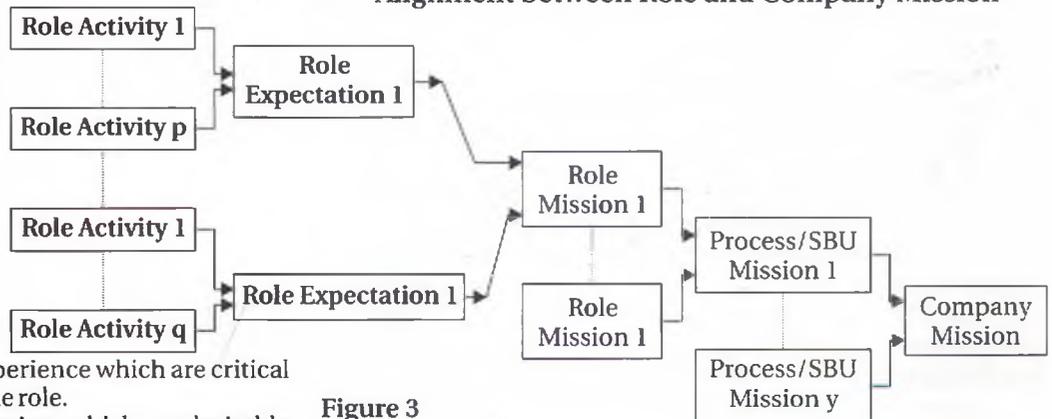


Figure 3

- *Proaction*: A role is more effective when action is taken in advance to anticipate future problems to be encountered in role performance, prevent the occurrence of such problems as far as possible, and minimize the negative manifestations of such problems if and when they occur.
- *Superordination*: A role can be made more effective when its contribution to higher levels/entities in the organization is made clear to the role occupant and when he/she realizes the importance of his/her role performance in terms of higher objectives contributed for.



ROBRAD METHODOLOGY

PROBRAD exercise is undertaken after identification of the role set and training of the role set members. Guidelines and approach have been standardized for conducting

PROBRAD exercise which involves a number of well-defined steps.

PROBRAD – The Guidelines

Conducive climate for PROBRAD is created and maintained by adhering to the following guidelines.

- The whole exercise is consciously targeted at realizing the objectives of PROBRAD.
- Both the aspects of the focal role, namely Maintenance (representing the minimum necessary functions in the role) and Development (representing the expanded/futuristic functions for superior role performance) are equally emphasized.
- The exercise is as much focused on the process used as on the results obtained.
- Power conflicts and dysfunctional behaviors are discouraged.
- Attributions for past failures are consciously avoided; discussions are based on issues and not on people.
- Discussions are kept on track to maintain focus on maximizing the effectiveness of the focal role.
- Active Listening (Manktelow, 2005) is promoted throughout the exercise.
- Role set members enjoy equal power; decisions are generally taken in a participative manner after achieving a consensus.
- Creative Involvement of role set members is ensured during the exercise (Srivastav, 2010) to fully harness the organizational knowledge available with them.
- Collaboration among role set members is promoted; competition among role set members is de-emphasized.
- Confrontation with problems is encouraged; avoiding, denying and rationalizing the problems are discouraged.
- Innovation is promoted for arriving at best solutions.
- Proactive Approach is emphasized, to prevent the occurrence of problems in future or to reduce its negative manifestations when prevention is not possible; reactive approach and inaction are discouraged.
- Superordination (or having a bigger goal that is more appealing than anything else) is created among role set

members to believe that realizing maximum possible effectiveness (Pareek, 1993) of the focal role is by the most important objective.

- Role-Taking (role occupant routinely taking the prescribed role) (Pareek, 1993) is discouraged.
- Role-Making (role occupant taking initiative to enrich his/her role, exceeding the expectations of significant others in the organization) (Pareek, 1993) is encouraged.

PROBRAD – The Approach

- PROBRAD facilitator creates conducive climate for the exercise by orienting the role set members to adhere to the above-mentioned guidelines. The facilitator also takes action as necessary to maintain conducive climate throughout the exercise.
- The following standardized procedure is adopted to finalize each element of role design.
- Role set members write their individual prescriptions for the role element (for attaining the best performance in the focal role, meeting all the objectives of PROBRAD) in the prescribed format.
- The focal role occupant presents his prescription for the role element to role set members.
- Each role set member responds to the focal role occupant, expressing his/her appreciation and/or concerns, offering critique, asking questions or seeking clarifications.
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- The focal role occupant responds to the role set member, expressing his/her appreciation and/or concerns, offering critique, asking questions or seeking clarifications.
- The focal role occupant finalizes the tentative design for the role element arriving at a consensus among the role set members.
- Tentative role design (compilation of tentative designs for all the role elements) is presented by the focal role occupant to the role senders.
- Tentative role design is re-examined by the role set members to ensure comprehensive alignment among the role elements and with all the organizational components. Role design is finalized by arriving at a consensus among the role set members.
- Changes required in the organizational structure, policies, system, processes, procedures for ensuring comprehensive alignment are documented and taken up with the top management in the organisation.
- PROBRAD exercise often leads to identification of roles that are overloaded or eroded (not important). Such roles are not amenable for Probrad. When identified, such roles are taken out of PROBRAD exercise. They are subjected to PROBRAD exercise in their new versions obtained after necessary structural changes in the organization. Overloaded roles may be split into multiple roles or their workload may be appropriately reduced. Eroded role may be abolished, independently enriched or combined with other suitable roles that are not eroded. It may also be possible to combine several eroded roles into one role.

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PROBRAD – The Steps

PROBRAD facilitator highlights the objectives for PROBRAD and directs the role set members to follow the above-mentioned guidelines and approach to complete the steps defined for PROBRAD exercise. These steps have been illustrated in the next section on PROBRAD Application.



PROBRAD APPLICATION

PROBRAD was applied for enhancing organizational effectiveness in information technology sector. The organization selected for the study, the focal role undertaken, steps followed in PROBRAD exercise, and major elements of role design finalized through the application of PROBRAD are described hereunder.

The Role Set

Discussions with SDIT Management revealed that the country manager needs to play his/her role for contributing to (a) building the image of the company in the country of operation (*The Image Building Process*), (b) winning contracts for the supply of business solutions (*The Contracting Process*), and (c) delivering effective business solutions to the customers, avoiding cost or time overruns (*The Solution Delivery Process*).

The role set for the country manager (Figure 4) was identified, keeping in view interactions required by him/her in the context of the above-mentioned business processes. It comprises the country manager himself/herself as the focal role occupant, the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) as the superior or boss, the direct reports or subordinates, and the peers (neither boss nor subordinate) within and outside SDIT.

The Organization

SDI Technologies (SDIT), an information technology solutions company based in Jakarta, Indonesia and operating in Australia, France, India, Indonesia, Singapore and USA, was selected for application of PROBRAD to enhance its effectiveness. The company was facing a peculiar problem. Its profit was declining inspite of increasing sales. SDIT was desperately looking for an urgent solution to arrest this negative trend. PROBRAD was applied in SDIT's operations in Indonesia where the problem was at its peak.

The Focal Role

Country managers in SDIT handled the entire company operation in their respective countries. The success of SDIT heavily depended on the success of its country managers. The role of *Country Manager* was therefore a critical role for SDIT. The first PROBRAD exercise in SDIT was conducted for country manager as the focal role.

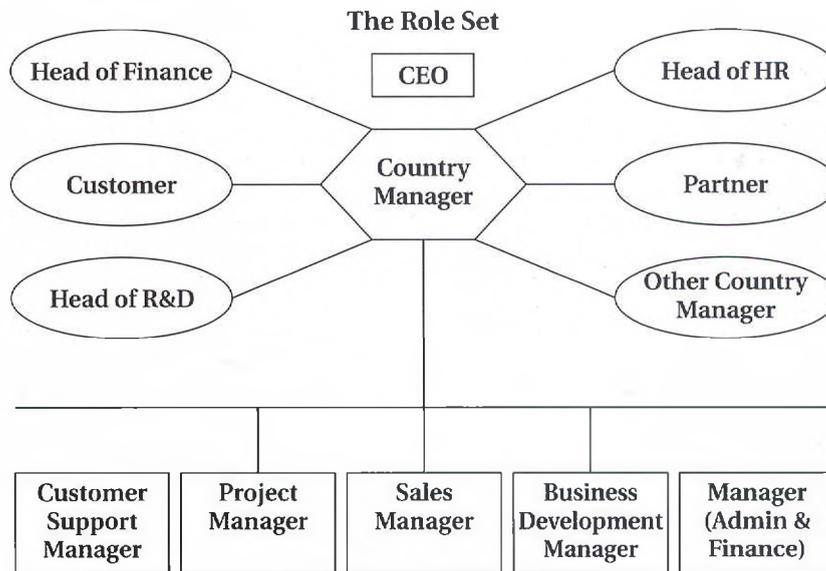


Figure 4

The direct reports or subordinates of the country manager are as follows.

- **Sales Manager:** Responsible for sales in the country.
- **Project Manager:** Responsible for execution of a project(s) in the country; works under the country manager for the duration of the project under technical guidance from Research and Development (R&D) Center.
- **Business Development Manager:** Provides technical support to the sales manager for the development of business; coordinating all technical matters for the country with the R&D Centre.

- **Manager (Customer Support Service):** Responsible for after sales services for the country.
- **Manager (Admin and Finance):** Responsible for financial and administrative functions for the country operations.

The internal peers for the country manager are as follows.

- **Head of Finance:** Defines the financial policies for the country operation; provides the financial resources for the country; supports the country manager on finance related matters.

- **Head of HR:** Defines the HR policies for the country operation; supports the country manager on HR issues.
- **Head of R&D:** Defines the technology policy for the country; provides new technology solutions for the country; supports the country manager on technical matters.
- **Other Country Manager:** Country managers in SDIT need to cooperate with each for efficient utilization of company resources and expertise. They also need to share their best practices, successes and failures for continuous learning at the company level.

The external peers for the country manager are as follows.

- **The Customers:** They need to be impressed for bagging their orders for new business solutions; they need to be convinced about the utility of the offered business solution for their smooth takeover and release of payments due.
- **The Partners:** Their cooperation is necessary for speedy completion of projects in the country. The role set members ratified the business processes to be served by the country manager and the formation of the role set for the country manager.

The Role Mission

The following role mission was finalized for the country manager in SDIT: "To realize the most efficient country operation."

Role Expectations

Seven role expectations as listed below were finalized for the country manager in SDIT.

- Build and maintain effective country organization (This corresponds with performance on the HR dimension)
- Build and maintain partnerships and alliances for products and services required in the country (This corresponds with performance on the operations dimension).
- Maximizing sales performance (This corresponds with performance on the marketing dimension).
- Build & maintain competence required for country's lines of business (This corresponds with performance on the operations dimension).
- Ensure the effectiveness of project execution (This corresponds with performance on the operations dimension).
- Maximize customer satisfaction (This corresponds with performance on quality dimension).
- Maximize profitability (This corresponds with performance on the financial dimension).

Other Elements of Role Design

Besides the above, *Critical Attributes* and *Behavioral Noms* were also finalized for country manager's role.

Role Design

Role Mission, Role Set, Role Expectations, Role Activities, Critical Attributes and *Behavioral Norms* finalized for the country manager were compiled in the form of country manager's role design.

Socialization

Socialization was done throughout the company for the role design finalized for the country manager.

Role Directory

Role design for the country manager was added to SDIT's role directory (compilation of role designs for the critical roles in company).



IMPACT OF PROBRAD

The newly defined role for the country manager made him/her responsible not only for bagging contracts from customers in his/her country but also for making country operations effective to deliver higher profits with higher customer satisfaction. The country manager felt empowered and motivated because of the resulting clarity of his/her role and enlargement of his/her responsibilities.

Problems Identified

During the course of PROBRAD it was revealed that SDIT's *Contracting Process* had inbuilt weakness. The country manager could sign the contract without examining the techno-economic feasibility of the project. The problem was aggravated by the *Incentive Policy* which permitted the release of high percentages of sales incentives to the country manager and his/her sales team just on signing the contract with the customer. The country manager and his/sales team had no compulsion, whatsoever, to care for project implementation, handing over the newly developed applications to the customers, and realizing the payments from the customers. This led to their recklessly promising the customers high end deliverables which were impractical, unwieldy or unduly expensive to realize. The result was predominance of selling non-implementable or 'difficult to implement' solutions which resulted in held up or delayed payments inspite of continual developmental efforts by the R&D Centre.

Solutions Implemented

SDIT's *Contracting Process* was redesigned to include techno-economic feasibility analysis of the project before signing the contract. The country manager was allowed to sign the contract after technical clearance from The Head of R&D and financial clearance from The Head of Finance.

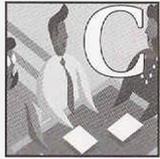
SDIT's *Incentive Policy* was changed to permit payment of sales incentive subject to successfully handing over the newly developed applications to the customer, and realizing the payments from the customer. Further the percentage of sales incentive depended on the profits earned, being higher for larger profits.



DISCUSSIONS

Focus group discussions held with SDIT executives involved in PROBRAD exercise confirmed that PROBRAD had resulted in improved employee engagement, communication, motivation, empowerment and teamwork. The country manager remarked that his role should have been analyzed and redesigned much earlier to prevent the erosion of profits for the country. The head of R&D

was happy to play a meaningful role in assuring the techno-economic feasibility of development projects. The junior members of the country manager's team felt happy that they had a say in how the country manager should function. The head of finance expressed his confidence that SDIT's erosion of profits would be arrested.



CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

PROBRAD focuses on enhancing role effectiveness while attaining a comprehensive organizational alignment. Application of PROBRAD in SDIT described above has led to clarifying the expanded role of the country

manager well beyond bagging contracts from the customers. It has revealed the weakness of the SDIT's *Contracting Process* and *Incentive Policy*. The study illustrates how PROBRAD can result in (a) enhancing the effectiveness of organizational roles and their related business processes, and (b) identifying the weakness of structures, policies, systems, processes and procedures that come in way of realizing role effectiveness.

The new *Role Design* comprising the *Role Mission*, *Role Expectations*, *Critical Attributes*, and *Behavioral Norms*, realized through the application of PROBRAD, can enable information technology industries to get the best from the role of a country manager. It serves as an excellent *human resource infrastructure* to facilitate introduction of progressive human resource management (Srivastav, 1999).

PROBRAD shows itself as a comprehensive and structural OD intervention. It can be gainfully employed for any type of organization for enhancing the effectiveness of roles, processes and organization as a whole, realizing a process based organizational design. It can be used to address problems causing role stress in organizations. PROBRAD is a practical OD intervention on which operational managers without the specific background of human resource management, organization behavior or organization development can be trained (Srivastav, 2011).

Further studies are recommended for conducting empirical research on the impact of PROBRAD preferably through longitudinal studies.

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