

Best practices in the field of HR



Prabodh Kumar Patra
General Manager – Human Resources,
ITC Limited, Paperboards and Specialty
Papers Division, 106, Sardar Patel Road,
Secunderabad, Telengana – 5000



Debi Prasad Roy
Deputy General Manager – Human
Resources, ITC Limited, Paperboards
and Specialty Papers Division
Unit-Tribeni, PO-Chandrahati
District-Hooghly, West Bengal
Pin-712504

Abstract: *The universalistic perspective of Human Resource (HR) Management have a set of practices that help in getting competitive advantage in the marketplace. It has a positive essence in building strong relationship and commitment based on ITC's Triple Bottom Line approach (Economy, Ecological, Society) which is the driving force that defines it's sustainability vision and growth path. The essence of optimal system of Human Resource Management based on the proven best practices in job design, employee selection, performance management, culture of excellence, employee relations, learning & development, enables the employees to achieve the expected organizational performance, including individual development and competitiveness by achieving desired abilities, motivation and performance irrespective of the location of the industry.*

Key Words: *HR Best Practices, Organizational Change, Leadership, Employee Relations, Employee Engagement, Capability Building, Employee Well Being, Diversity & Inclusion.*

Introduction: ITC Limited established in 1910, is a diversified conglomerate with businesses spanning Fast Moving Consumer Goods comprising Foods, Personal Care, Paperboards and Packaging, Cigarettes and Cigars, Branded Apparel, Education & Stationery Products, Incense Sticks and Safety Matches; Hotels, Agri Business and Information Technology. It has diversified into 13 businesses of tomorrow collaborating with 4 million farmers and creating 6 million sustainable livelihoods. ITC has around 200 manufacturing units. It is the market leader in Paper & Paperboard industry, owns 100 hotels across 70 locations, 25 FMCG mother brands and 36,500 direct employees. ITC is one of the only companies to be Carbon Positive for last 16 years; Water Positive for 19 years and Solid Waste recycling positive for last 14 years.

ITC Limited has Multi-Business, Multi-Product and Multi-Location operations, with its foot prints in various parts of India. Products of the ITC Group have a strong brand recall and enjoy a significant market share in their respective segments. The strong brand equity of the Group has been built through use of latest

technologies, continuous research & development and innovation. The Organization has set up highly reputed Research and Development Institutes in various fields.

Identifying social issues & contribution to the society have been close to the heart of the ITC. A host of initiatives set up by the group throughout India in diverse field is a testimony of social, welfare & caring for people which have been the philosophy of the organization.



ITC's Paperboards and Specialty Papers Business is the leader in volume, product range, market reach and environmental performance, and is the clear market leader in the value-added paperboards segment. Providing internationally competitive quality and cost, the Business caters to a wide spectrum of packaging, graphic, communication, writing, printing and specialty paper requirements.

ITC takes great pride in servicing a large cross-section of industry requirements - from cigarette papers and Components to FMCG cartons, from electrical insulation papers to Bio-based Barrier Coated Board, from decorative laminate base to writing and printing papers and much more. ITC straddles the entire spectrum of paperboards - from 100% virgin, food-grade boards which are made from renewable and sustainable sources to 100% recycled boards.

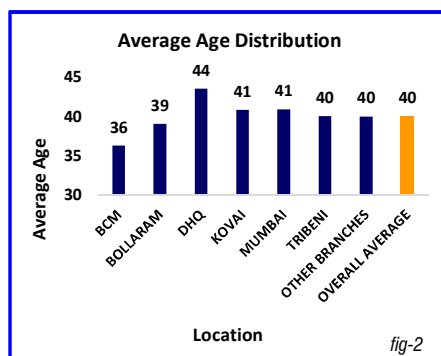
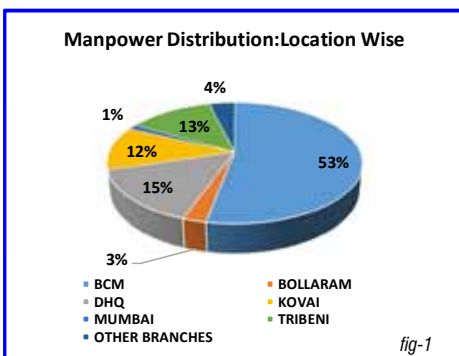
ITC Limited, Paperboards & Specialty Paper Division has its operation in four units as mentioned below

S.N.	Unit Location	Products Manufactures	City Category
1	Bhadrachalam, Telangana	Paperboards - ECF Paper, Food grade boards	Tier-III
2	Tribeni, West Bengal	Specialty Papers- Communication, Décor, Cigarette tissues etc.	Tier-III
3	Bollaram, Telangana	Polycoated Paper	Tier-III
4	Kovai, Tamil Nadu	Recycled Paper Boards	Tier-III

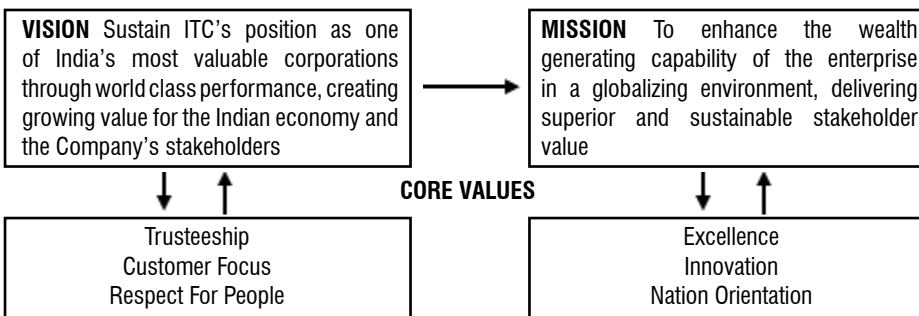
Table - 1



The major portion i.e. the manufacturing units are located in the Tier-III cities that require huge portion of the land for its operation. The operation is majorly carried out with the contribution of the labour force around the vicinity and rest are from different geographical location of the country. Providing all the facilities to the employees and their family is a challenge as compared to the amenities they get in Tier-I cities. But, as ITC's rich culture is rooted in its core values of respect for people and belief in empowerment, it has taken various measures to develop and keep the employee and their family engaged.



With the majority of the workforce is located in the Tier-III cities having an average age of 40, the aspirations of the workforce has been taken care to engage & utilize their potential with the streamlined HR strategies.



LEADERSHIP

ITC Ltd has carved a unique position in the Paper Industry by virtue of its leadership and best customer experiences. The HR strategies and policies ingrained with the core values of the organization is religiously followed and reviewed periodically by the Senior Executives. The Leaders in ITC creates and nurture the enabling environment that foster the change process. Visionary leadership coupled

SN	Communication Channel	Frequency
1	Townhall Meetings/Communication from Divisional Chief Executive's Desk	Half Yearly
2	Townhall Meetings – Unit Level	Quarterly
3	HR Mithra – HR Policies & Procedures	Available all time
4	PSPD HR Xpress	Regular Communication
5	Newsletters – a) BCM Desk b) Samvaad Patra	a) Monthly b) Quarterly

Table - 2

with strong alignment is the power behind the enabling environment of our operating unit. Our visionary leaders develop a shared vision/mission; champion organizational change; groom future leaders; create a culture of high performance; encourage innovation and agility; stimulate customer centric behavior and empower employees to utilize their full potential, talent and creativity. Our leaders ensure the ongoing success of the organization balancing the needs and expectation of all stakeholders.

Caring for people is very close to our heart. The vision of sustaining the position as one of the India's most valuable corporations is possible through world class performance, creating growing value for the Indian economy and the Company's stakeholders.

The Senior Leadership team set the Vision, Mission and Core Values (reiterated in Strategic Business Plan--SBP) and the strategic direction as part of Strategic Planning. The Vision, Mission and Core Values were first evolved through series of participating workshop guiding us successfully throughout our journey to excellence.

Code of Conduct is the guiding tenet for ethics and business principles. Vision, Mission and values are communicated by the leaders constantly through townhall meetings in all units named Samanvayam, Sangamam etc. These are also displayed in the training centers, display boards, company booklets, HR Mitra (Online repository of HR Policies and practices) at the time of employees' induction and through trainings. The policies, unit goals & objectives are derived from our Mission and cascaded to every individual in the form of Key Objectives and Key Performance Areas.

Communication being the vital management component of the organization whose one of the main objective is to update employees on new policies, ensure safety throughout the organization and to listen to its stake holders. To be successful, ITC have comprehensive policies and strategies for communicating with all their stakeholders including community at large where the moto of the diversification is to reach maximum employees for transparent communication. Efforts like these has helped the organization to build the morale, satisfaction and engagement of all stakeholders.

RECRUITMENT

Being in the Paper manufacturing industry, many challenges arrives right from recruiting the right talent to retaining them. As there are limited Institutes pertaining to Pulp & Paper Technology in India, so it's difficult to fetch these talents. Moreover, the operational units are also placed in the Tier-III cities of the country, the kind of facilities that is to be provided to balance their growing needs and wants is also tough.

When right HR Strategy is put in place, many challenges can be addressed, We give opportunities to all the relevant B. Tech, Diploma, ITI and Graduation degree holder to become part of our family and groom them to be finest Professionals matching the competencies and requirements of Paper Industry. Once onboarded, their career plan is made and various developmental programmes are put in place by assessing their needs to groom them as a future leader. Employee's other needs are also put in place to motivate them and their family to get engaged.

JOURNEY OF EXCELLENCE

Continual Improvement & value creation are the two focus areas of the company. In order to sustain the above, the company leadership has always given thrust on value creation for all its stake holders i.e. customers, suppliers, employees, society etc.

The environment at ITC is created where people participate with commitment, passion and apply their knowledge and skill for improvement of the organization. The top management leads by examples through participation in TPM activities at shop floor, conducting various audits, conducting training, being part of focused improvement teams etc. The outstanding leadership is evident from various policies they have drawn for Quality, TPM and environmental aspects etc. The company has the distinction of being the first in adoption of latest technology, management systems & environmental measures.

The focus of TPM is to involve everyone and create ownership at all levels. TPM journey focuses on comprehensive loss elimination through innovation, to make the unit profitable and remain competitive. It is one of the initiatives which ensures direct participation of all employees.

To ensure everyone's involvement, TPM structure is designed by categorizing all the areas in JH Teams (Jishu Hozen) and DMTs (Daily Management Team). All these teams are driven through 7 Pillars Autonomous Maintenance, Quality Maintenance, Planned Maintenance, Environment Health & Safety, Learning & Development, Kobetsu Kaizen & Office TPM. These pillar teams improve systems using subject expertise and implementing pillar methodologies for all the DMTs.

The initial focus of this journey to excellence was to involve everyone in Process, Asset & People care by 5 'S' housekeeping, eliminate of waste & abnormalities, then continuous improvement through kaizen culture, standardization, mistake proofing & visual control.

After significant improvement in these areas, we integrated Six Sigma with the guidance of Indian Statistical Institute to expedite the excellence journey further, which has truly helped in improvement of measurement & control, benchmarking, structured data & fact-based approach and finally quality improvement through focused improvement projects.

By all these initiatives, Units are improving people, process and equipment reliability. This has changed the work culture of the units. Now a day's employees are using statistical tools and solve chronic small problems in their areas. We also have quarterly kaizen campaign initiative for continuous improvement across all the departments, and we are achieving zero breakdowns, zero injuries, zero defects in most of the areas. Thus, improving the profitability, quality standard and also ensuing safety of all the people. As a result, we have more than 41 Black Belts, 174 Green Belts and 365 Yellow Belts receiver that have been successfully assessed and certified by the organization.

CULTURE OF ACCESSIBILITY (EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT INITIATIVES)

The organization-wide initiatives, accessibility must receive full buy-in from executives in order to reach its maximum potential. A commitment to accessibility from the top means that the agenda

SN	Engagement Initiatives
1	Appreciation - Round of Applause, Sabaash card
2	Competition/Campaign- Kovai Kaizen Competition, Safety Campaign, Quarterly Kaizen Campaign, Envi ronmental/TPM quiz competition etc.
3	Mahila Samity – Spouse of Employees involvement in development of themselves and society
4	Sports Tournaments – T10 Cricket League, Carom Tournament, football tournament etc.
5	Family Get-together – Family Carnival. Picnics, Cultural Events viz Durga Puja, Ganesh Puja, Diwali celebration etc.

Table - 3

will get the visibility and prioritization it requires, and this attention will trickle down throughout the business.

Senior management is quite accessible to the employees and follows open door policy. The management has always encouraged employees to speak up their mind in the various open house communication meetings and otherwise. Apart from this, senior executives walk extra mile to make themselves available to interact with the different forums like

- Shop Floor HR Connect
- DHQ Help desk
- Grievance Redressal Committee

These were initiated to further enhance the accessibility to the employees. Under 'Shop floor HR Connect' program, HR proactively plan visits in the area to know the issues or the activities that can be enhanced for better operation and services and through 'DHQ Help Desk' they know the pulse of the customers. Conducting surveys like 'Voice of Customer' help the HR team to work in the improvement areas and welcome new changes for better experience for the customer. These forum helps in resolving the issues then & there and also helps in breaking the barriers.

PROACTIVE EMPLOYEE RELATIONS

Proactive Employee Relation (ER) is an innovative holistic ER strategy and is based on the concept of Triple Bottom Line (Business, Environment and Society). It preempts/helps for elimination/minimizing the risks caused by disruption, emerging for any stakeholders through collaborations, ensuring minimal impact on the ER Scenario. Proactive ER ensures that no ER decision affects adversely, not only to Business but also to Environment and Society.

The concept of Proactive ER and various strategic interventions ensures an irreversible change process through the following ER Principles and balances the need of workmen & contract labour.

ER Principles

- ❖ Respect for Individual (irrespective of affiliation)
- ❖ Participative decision making
- ❖ Meritocracy
- ❖ Transparency
- ❖ Respect for employee representatives
- ❖ Belief in Stakeholder-ship/Partnerships
- ❖ Right to form Associations/Unions/ Collective bodies to be respected
- ❖ Natural justice
- ❖ Share the gains of Productivity
- ❖ No Work-No Pay during strife
- ❖ No Victimization

Identification of Needs of Stakeholders :**Needs identified for Workmen**

- ❖ Fair Wages
- ❖ Higher Aspirations/ Challenging Roles
- ❖ Upskilling & Collaboration
- ❖ Work with latest technology and learn to treat data
- ❖ Recognition for their contribution
- ❖ Quick grievance redressal
- ❖ Better Quality of Life in terms of Medical / Education / Recreation

Needs identified for Management

- ❖ Zero Revenue Loss
- ❖ Zero Accident
- ❖ Productivity Benchmark for Industry
- ❖ Brand Appreciation
- ❖ Ideal Corporate Citizenship Standard
- ❖ No non-compliance / legal / statutory penalties etc.

Needs identified for Society

- ❖ Employment and Business Generation
- ❖ Betterment of Infrastructure – Road, Sanitation, Drainage System
- ❖ No Negative Impact on Environment
- ❖ Support in terms of access to Benefit infrastructure - Medical Centers, Ambulance, School, Playgrounds, Community Hall.

Needs identified for Government

- ❖ Employment and Revenue Generation
- ❖ Co-partnering in developing Infrastructure-Road, Sanitation, Drainage System, School, Medical Centres
- ❖ No Negative Impact on Environment
- ❖ Support in terms of access to infrastructure -Medical Centers, Training Centers, Community Hall for carrying out Public Programmes

Innovations and Interventions:**Workmen:**

- ❖ 100% implementation of all long-term agreement points within promised timelines.
- ❖ Prior Communications of all actionable affecting workmen
- ❖ Position based graded Manpower Rationalization over an agreed long-term timeline
- ❖ Ensuring no Job Loss arising out of Manpower rationalization

- ❖ Scholarships, External Skill Development Programmes
- ❖ Funding and access to all local festivals, cultural and sports programs with no distinction on category of engagement of employees
- ❖ Workers Participation in Management through various work groups
- ❖ Job to eligible dependent in case of death in harness.
- ❖ Support in times of natural calamities like Covid – food, shelter, no deduction of wages

Management:

- ❖ Full commitment to agreed discussions whether written or verbal
- ❖ Encouraging of Issues specific discussions
- ❖ Proper training and job distribution
- ❖ Structured On the job training on additional deployment

Government and Society:

- ❖ Access to Infrastructure – Medical Centre, Ambulance, School, Training Centres, Community Halls
- ❖ Co-partnering in Infrastructure Development-Sanitation, Drainage, Roads, Illuminations, Solid Waste Management
- ❖ Proactively ensure minimum negative environment impact.
- ❖ Support to Government and Locals during COVID- Ration Supply, Mask, Sanitizer, Oxygen, Vaccination to local populace
- ❖ CSR Activities – Solid Waste Management, Mother & Child Health, Vocational Training, School WASH - WAtEr, Sanitation & Hygiene, Wellbeing out of Waste, Upliftment of Girl Child, Notebook distribution to Primary Schools, Health Restoration of Govt. Hospitals, Free Oxygen Supply to Govt from exclusive Oxygen Plant, Water Shed Development Programme.

Outcomes:

- ❖ No Revenue loss for last Three decades due to Industrial Disputes, irrespective of having multiple Unions in each Unit.
- ❖ Planned improvement in productivity through Manpower Rationalization
- ❖ Preferred Employer & Business Partner in every locality we operate
- ❖ Consistent increase in Market Volume, Revenue and Production Capacity over Three decades.

CAPABILITY BUILDING OF WORKFORCE

ITC always takes pride in sharing its excellence journey towards achieving high value products and customers' experience. The operation behind the scene is backed up by the learning and development that act as a key component for fast paced sustainable business growth. Over the years, ITC has invested continuously in various learning and development initiatives. It has focused on specialized trainings in order to build requisite technical and behavioral competencies. The initiative started with the competency mapping of the permanent employee and skill index improvement of the workers followed by the systematic internal and external audits. A battery of programme has been deployed towards the capability building of the entire workforce. Blended learning approach along with continual assessments, on job evaluation and feedback has been made a part of day to day organizational processes. This had a lasting impact on the employees, for it has given them requisite exposure and knowledge to benchmark the skills with the highest standards.

Other noteworthy initiative was introduced by the company which was focused on achieving excellence through technical trainings. Various initiatives like Adhyayan, Grow & Grow 2 Me, Prayaas 4 Me, Pragati 2 Me, YOUngistaan 4.0 etc. are the programmes carried out for imparting knowledge and build the culture of learning. The operational performance was measured as a tool to gauge needle movement. Sizeable investments have been made to improve decision making skills, effective feedbacks to enhance productivity and efficiency. Deployed programmes target all levels, starting from fresh engineers. Skills gaps were recognised by the company between knowledge and skill within its vibrant young work force. The provision of training and certification ensured successful elimination of the skill gap. ITC not only focuses on training the white and blue collar but it believes in upskilling the Badli worker to get into the skilled position of the organization thereby enhancing their employability.

Learning and development for the company did not limit itself during Covid pandemic, but adapted new ways of learning. It focused on its people, system and provided with a platform for communication. It also included specific training programmed with exposure to the best practices and even focused on re-learning. Digital learning became the prime centre for the organisation's growth. Persistence of the organisation in pursuit to create a progressive eco-system for all is worth a note. Learning Management System provided a platform where core technical know how of the processes are provided via video to the employees to get deeper understanding of the processes. Along with this, people utilizes the MOOC platforms to enhance their competencies.

SN	Learning Initiatives	SN	Learning Initiatives
1	Gurukul	6	Upskilling Badli worker
2	Grow & Grow 2 Me	7	Adhyayan
3	Prayaas 4 Me	8	MOOC Platform(edX)
4	Pragati 2 Me	9	Learning Management System
5	YOUngistaan 4.0	10	Digital Capability Program

Table - 4

EMPLOYEE WELL BEING

For ITC, workplace well-being relates to all aspects of working life, right from the quality and safety of the physical environment, to how workers feel about their work, their working environment, the climate at work and work organization. The aim of measures for workplace well-being is to make sure all employees are safe, healthy, satisfied and engaged at work.

To tackle the challenges thrown by this global pandemic, ITC PSPD has worked on various areas to mitigate the risk arising out of it.

Building Trust

- ❖ Raising Awareness through PSPD Corona Communication Mail, Posters and small awareness camps
- ❖ Circulating Precautionary measures & guidelines through mailers and e-learning modules.
- ❖ Disinfecting offices & shop floor on regular basis.
- ❖ Community Outreach – felicitating doctors & hospitals in neighboring location. Provision of Oxygen to hospitals near plants.

Preparedness & Response in terms of protective equipment and isolation centers

- ❖ Reserving quarters, social centers and Guest houses as isolation wards.
- ❖ Tie ups with major hospitals for Home care packages, Medical consultations & Hospitalization (Viz Apollo, Yashoda, STAR, RUBY etc.)
- ❖ Equipping medical team for response.
- ❖ Liaising with other division in other cities to cover our Marketing Offices staff.
- ❖ Continue providing PPEs to employees
- ❖ Disinfection inside colony, factory, Offices and Guest Houses on regular basis.
- ❖ Setting up of the internal Covid Task Force with clear cut responsibilities.

Manpower Availability: Uncertainty over manpower availability

- ❖ Nationwide Lockdown was imposed in staggered manner starting Second wave in March'21
- ❖ Preparedness to curb second wave effect at all locations

Co-ordination with Environment - Liaising with Govt health officers and Hospitals

- ❖ Liaising and Convincing district authorities of our preparedness level
- ❖ Enhanced collaboration with officials from Govt & Hospitals for seeking permission of medical assistance in case emergency arising out of Govt restrictions on drugs and movements.

Vaccination Drive

- ❖ Vaccination drive conducted across the Division for covering the maximum spectra of the workforce
- ❖ Around 26000 Managers/Emp/ESPs/Family covered
- ❖ Vaccination Help-desk and Camps organized
- ❖ Around 99 % of eligible stake holders covered with the two doses of vaccination and overall 93 % Covered
- ❖ IT Support and other arrangement for WFH
- ❖ Provision of Laptops, printers and dongle to managers to facilitate work from home.
- ❖ Providing necessary support in movement of documents from office to manager's residence and vice versa (Wherever essential), without disturbing work from home.

Wellness webinars

- ❖ Arranged a series of webinars on Emotional Wellness, Financial Management, Boosting Immunity through diet, Wellbeing, Eye Yoga etc. for the wellbeing of the staff.

AWARDS & ACCOLADES

A culture of appreciation and gratitude across the Division has been imbibed since inception. Various platforms institutionalized across the units to recognize the employees have been seeing great acceptance.

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

ITC Diversity & Inclusion initiative branded as "Sangam". It leverages diversity, equity and inclusion (DE&I) with the qualities, experiences and work styles that make individuals unique (e.g., age, race, religion, disabilities, ethnicity) to support business objectives. It also includes matters that focus on diversity-related careers, communications, legal and regulatory issues, technology, metrics, outsourcing & effective diversity practices.

In spite of the challenges of the COVID-19 crisis, women's representation improved across all levels. Right from making the facilities available for the women and specially abled person. ITC has made the policy in place whose intent behind is to provide flexibility, recognize specific life situations and ensure employees continue to contribute in the context of varied circumstances.

Following initiative has been done like Gender sensitization, institution of Internal Complaint Committee, developmental programme for female employees.

Sn	Awards/Appreciation Platform
1	Total Employee Involvement-Championship Awards at CII 14th National Competitiveness & Cluster Summit, 2021 – Platinum Award
2	Best HR Practices – CII 13th National Competitiveness & Cluster Summit 2020 – Runner Up
3	Women Excellence Award in 7th National Conference on Diversity in Management – Development of Women Executives
4	National Award for Industrial Relations-AIOE, 2020
5	Best HR Practices in Large Manufacturing Category, 2020
6	Round of Applause
7	APPLAUD Publications
8	Energy Conservation R&R event
9	Kaizen competitions
10	Virtual SHE (Safety, Health and Environment) quiz

Table - 5

SN	Initiatives for Female/Specially abled employee
1	Adequate Policy for support
2	Recruitment strategy in place to onboard new employee
3	Developmental Programme
4	Recognition of exemplary work
5	Long Service Award – 25 Years completion
6	Creche facility

Table - 6

CONCLUSION

Balancing the needs of all the stakeholders of the organization must be always put on the priority. The intervention of best HR practices is where all the process executions becomes easy. An organization cannot have best product and quality of service in place unless best interventions by the human resource management is made. A highly motivated and engaged workforce helps to make the success story of the organization.

References

Loo-See Beh and Leap-Han Loo (2013), Human Resource Management Best Practices and firm performance : A Universalistic Perspective Approach, Serbian Journal of Management 8(2)(2013) 155-167.

Siky. M. (2013), Best Practices in Human Resource Management: The source of excellent Performance and sustained competitiveness, Central European Business Review, Vol(2) Managing Organizational Communication, SHRM, 2022

URL-<https://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/tools-and-samples/toolkits/pages/managingorganizationalcommunication.aspx>

Workplace Well Being, International labour Organization

URL - https://www.ilo.org/safework/areasofwork/workplace-health-promotion-and-well-being/WCMS_118396/lang--en/index.htm