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Employee Well-Being In Focus At Isha's 'Human Is Not A Resource' Digital Leadership Program

10 August 2020, Coimbatore: Isha Leadership Academy (ILA) held its annual 3-day intensive, Human is NOT a Resource (HINAR), on a virtual platform bringing together 325 participants and 37 highly successful business leaders to explore practical and implementable solutions for businesses in a world sideswiped by a global pandemic.

The theme for this year's HINAR was **Dealing with people dilemmas in challenging times**, a subject that has worried industry leaders and business owners faced with tough decisions on retrenchments, pay cuts, and virtual workspaces.

At the start of the program, Sadhguru addressed participants via a video message. He said it was important for business leaders to bring out the best in people around them during times of uncertainty. "Especially when times are uncertain, what sort of human beings you have around you in your business is important. People who will give their best, people who you can trust, who will not be an impediment." It was upto leaders to elicit these qualities from their people, he added. "It is my wish and my blessing you must become that person who constantly unlocks potential in other people. Let's make it happen," said Sadhguru in his brief message welcoming participants to HINAR 2020.

Jeby Cherian, Former Managing Partner, IBM Global Business Services (India/SA), who currently leads the ILA initiative, said, "Isha Leadership Academy is an initiative by Sadhguru to create conscious leaders across various segments of the society including, business, politics, civil society, government and youth. For far too long, we have

adopted management methods developed with just efficiency and profit as the only motives of a business enterprise. ILA is bringing a fresh perspective on leadership through programs such as HINAR that includes the well-being of the human being, the planet, and communities along with profit as the purpose of any enterprise."

The program was moderated by Shalini Kamath, Founder and CEO, SK & Associates and featured Mr. Alok Tandon CEO of INOX.

During the program, the participants kept the chat box buzzing with their questions, comments and appreciation. They agreed that the program structure which promoted in-depth closed group interactions, encouraged them to deepen the discourse around their specific challenges and gain insights from fellow participants and the 37 CEOs who were program facilitators.

Keeping employees motivated has been one of the biggest challenges that industry has faced and flagged repeatedly at different forums including online interactions with Sadhguru, Founder-Isha Foundation, which promotes Isha Leadership Academy.

BS Nagesh, Founder, TRRAIN, and Non-Executive Chairman, Shoppers Stop, said that organisations which had recognized the need to include employees in decision-making had gained their trust and responded innovatively to the challenges. He cited the example of an organization walking the talk by engaging employees to find solutions; the employees surprised millions of their customers by calling to check on their wellbeing. The customers, who were accustomed to only receiving sales calls from the organization, were pleasantly surprised by the organization's expression of concern.

Murali Sivaraman, Former President, Philips Lighting, who was one of the HINAR Resource Leaders – a mentor and guide for a group of participants - said, "ILA is a unique program - where the participants and accomplished business leaders discuss business challenges with intensity before, during and after the program. These challenges include questions on Leadership, Organisation, and People practices. An engagement unparalleled in terms of form, substance and execution."

Sangeeta Pendurkar, CEO, Pantaloons and Jaypore, Aditya Birla Fashion and Retail, summed up the mood of employees during these challenging times: “Cut my pay, don’t cut my self-esteem.”

Arunthathy Gnaneshwar, one of the participants said, “I ensure my employees maintain their cool with frequent meetings and a simple form of Yoga at least for 30 minutes every day.”

The session also explored how organizations were dealing with a new operations model: work from home. Basab Mitra, Partner, McKinsey & Company said it was “a new skill” that had to be learnt. He said with many employees working remotely, organizations must adapt to a new kind of leadership that was less intrusive and more collaborative - building trust and leading for results. “We have to instil a new culture. Leaders must lead and not micro-manage. We also must change the definition of success and failure,” he said adding that organizations would need to be a lot more patient, empathetic and trusting as work from home infrastructure is fraught with a variety of subjective challenges. The new normal has made people excessively dependent on technology and connectivity which are not always seamless and trouble-free.

Apart from focused group discussions and Q&A sessions the online version of HINAR also included a short segment of meditation audio-guided by Sadhguru.

Isha Leadership Academy was established with the aim to cultivate leadership as an innate and intuitive process. ILA’s programmes are designed to offer insights and unique perspectives on nurturing the best of human potential. The Academy has been conducting leadership forums focused on scaling up, leadership, talent management and innovation for C-suite attendees.

If you would like to know more about this, please write to mediarelations@ishafoundation.org.