

From HR to world of finance

Managers should go through one round of handling business issues before they move into a line role

The first step for HR professionals wanting to make a career in managing a business is to work through their competencies in finance. Though I had started off my career in HR, circumstances forced me to work with numbers when I founded my own company. Now, I have found my calling in the world of finance and general management, thanks to the transition to being an entrepreneur. I liked the change from dealing with softer HR issues to the harder nuts and bolts, numbers and metrics. I seem to have found my comfort zone in that overtime. If you ask me to make a choice between analysing a balance sheet and designing a performance appraisal system, I will choose the first.

The journey

I first worked as a HR trainee in Godrej & Boyce, moved on to the Essar Group from where I was the only HR manager in India among a group of 12 young managers, selected to study on a Chevening scholarship at the Leeds University. I came back and joined as a Head of HR in IDFC. That stint widened my interest in the areas of infrastructure lending and finance and in 2000, I ventured to founding a HR solutions company called Peopleone Consulting. JP Morgan invested an initial amount in our company and I was the largest shareholder. The company became

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— Ajit Isaac
MD and CEO, IKYA Human Capital Solutions



India's largest HR services company in four to five years and then we sold it to Adecco. Since then, there has been no looking back and I went on to invest in IKYA Human Capital Solutions. Today, IKYA employs close to 70,000 people, targeted revenues of Rs 1,400 crore for this year and is the most profitable HR services company in India.

The transition

The transition though exciting was not simple. I had to constantly improve two aspects of my life: Sales and corporate structuring. One of the challenges that I had, and I keep coming across occasionally is that we get too process oriented in dealing with people and in the psychology of people issues. But, my understanding of people dynamics and the need as a business manager to keep people with you, because, in reality they are the building blocks on which you are able to create a business structure, helped me a great deal.

Today, the senior management in IKYA are all internally developed and have been there since its inception and that I think could not have happened but for the fact that I came from a background of HR.

Roadmap to a business leader

I wouldn't advise anybody to take a misadventure into becoming a management professional overnight unless he is really training himself. They should rather gravitate towards multi-functional roles through career rotation. It will be beneficial for them to first understand issues such as shop floor dynamics, production, cost of capital, quality, collections, operating metrics of that type before they start moving to a business role. It would be better if they go through one round of handling business issues before they get into managing an entire business. ■■

As told by **Ajit Isaac**, Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer, IKYA Human Capital Solutions

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