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Dr. Rajani Tewari

CREATING A COLLABORATIVE AND INCLUSIVE
WORKPLACE AT GREEN CELL MOBILITY

Explore Latest Edition



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— Shweta Singh | The CEO Magazine —

Success in the business world is often measured by profit, products, or market share, but what truly defines an organisation's success? It is definitely more than just financial milestones. If you look closely, businesses don't build themselves; people do. It's the people who build the business from the ground up, bring ideas to life, and are responsible for growing a business to heights. A company's growth is determined by how well their workforce is nurtured and empowered. This is where Human Resources steps in.

HR departments help to develop companies, teams, and more. Whether the first port of call for staff members or managing pay and performance, human resources comes in many forms, which is why HR is important to a company. Given their empathetic nature, traditionally HR is considered a department where women have a strong foothold. Yet despite their dominance in the field, only a few rise to true leadership positions. And one such powerhouse is Dr. Rajani Tewari.

With over two decades of experience, Rajani has redefined what leadership in HR looks like. With a doctorate in Management and a Certified Master Trainer with Dale Carnegie and Franklin Covey, she has dedicated her career to making HR a strategic function rather than just a support role. At present she is serving as the Chief People Officer at Green Cell Mobility, helping build strong, agile, and future-ready teams. But more than her achievements as a professional, it's the way she leads people, with passion and empathy, that makes her story inspiring.

THE MAKING OF A LEADER

For Rajani, the path to a leadership role in human resources was anything but conventional. Hailing from Delhi and a conservative Brahmin family, she was the first girl child in her family to pursue higher education and, eventually, a career.

Even as a child, Rajani was empathetic. So, when she completed her MBA in 2002, choosing HR felt like a natural fit. Joining HR was not just a profession for her; she wanted to make a real difference in people's careers. However, her journey was not without challenges. Coming from a background where sending a girl out of the city for education or work was unheard of, she had to shatter boundaries to create a path of her own. But once she entered the professional world, there was no looking back. She joined a leading firm and went on to build an impressive career working with some of the best companies across diverse industries.

One of the values that defined her entire career was her commitment to ethical transitions, as she had never worked in the same industry twice. "If I work in a healthcare company and say it's the best, how can I say the same if I move to another healthcare company?" she explains. This belief has shaped her journey, allowing her to bring fresh perspectives to every organisation she has been a part of.

While some professionals simply continue working without stepping into leadership roles, Rajani always aspired for growth. She recalls, "In 2004, I was at a success bash for the organisation I was working with. The lady leading HR left a lasting impression on me, not just because of her position, but because of her humility and the impact she had on people. I won't lie; I manifested it. I thought to myself, 'If I get the opportunity, I don't just want to be like her; I want to be even better.' Not for the sake of ambition, but because I believed that the right kind of HR leader can truly transform an organisation."



Coming from a joint family, she had always understood that power comes with responsibility. Leadership for her never was about authority; it was about taking ownership, making tough decisions, and driving meaningful change. That vision, combined with her dedication, shaped her into the leader that she is today.

Her leadership journey started taking shape in 2008, and today, she is the Chief People Officer at Green Cell Mobility, a pioneering startup in sustainable

mobility. "Being in a startup comes with its own challenges and many firsts, but that's what makes the journey so exciting," she shares.

UNSHAKEN, UNAPOLOGETIC, AND UNSTOPPABLE

As a woman in the business world, the journey is rarely straightforward. Most of the time the journey is filled with moments of doubt and there's a constant struggle to find your voice in boardrooms where your

presence is still questioned. Rajani has faced these challenges firsthand, but she chose not to let them define her.

"There are times when you're sitting in that boardroom, struggling to find your voice. But you have to find it; you can't just be an echo," she shares. Early in her career, she had moments where a male colleague's words stung harder than they should have. "I remember once, something was said that really upset me. I walked back to my cabin, washed my face, took a deep breath,



and then walked out smiling. Because the moment you let yourself look weak, you compromise your position."

One of the biggest lessons she has learned is that, as a woman, your threshold to endure is always more than men. In a world where women are expected to prove themselves at every step they take, resilience becomes second nature. "People might see it as being headstrong, but it's not that; we are just a little guarded as women. And that's completely okay."

For Rajani, the key to navigating these challenges has been self-belief. "Once you understand your true potential, you don't need external validation. You do your homework, put in the work, and own your space. You can take feedback, but you can't afford to be unprepared." She believes that every woman has a choice; to become the victim or be the hero of her own story. And she has chosen to be the latter. "I'm a she-hero," she says. It is this mindset that has allowed her to break stereotypes and be the leader that she is. Because, at the end of the day, leadership isn't about fitting in, it's about standing tall, unshaken, and unapologetically yourself.

GREEN CELL MOBILITY: A PEOPLE-FIRST ORGANISATION

Green Cell Mobility as an organisation stands by its people. It's an organisation built for and by its people. "We are a highly democratic organization," Rajani shares. "Every employee, regardless of their position, has a voice, and they are given an equal amount of respect, trust, and empowerment."

One of the values that define Green Cell Mobility is agility. As the first movers in the electric mobility sector, the company has had to navigate uncharted territory. "We don't shy away from making mistakes," Rajani explains. "In fact, we celebrate them because every mistake is a lesson that helps us move forward. Of course, we ensure that mistakes don't turn into patterns, but we do not penalize people for learning through trial and error."

This mindset has helped Green Cell Mobility achieve many firsts in the industry. They registered the first EV bus in Chennai and even secured the first green loan. But beyond all these milestones, what truly differentiates the company is its people-centric approach. "We are an organization that completely swears by its people," Rajani emphasizes. "Our leadership team, our HODs, even the junior staff—everyone knows that fairness and ethics are non-negotiable here."

Being a fair and people-centric organisation has rewarded Green Cell Mobility with employee retention. While startups typically see high attrition within two to three years, Green Cell has defied the norm. "In the last close to five years, we've had hardly any attrition," Rajani shares with pride. "And it's not because we lure people with money. It's the way we treat them that makes all the difference."

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION

"I've been working on equity, inclusion, and diversity long before it was a formal KRA for HR professionals," says Rajani. At Green Cell Mobility, diversity is ingrained in the company's DNA. The organisation strongly believes in the diversity of skill, background, geography, and opportunity, ensuring that everyone, regardless of gender or background, is treated fairly in terms of pay, responsibilities, and career growth. Mobility industry which is traditionally a male-dominated industry, Green Cell is setting a new benchmark with 10% of its workforce comprising women and other genders, a record in this sector. But for the company, diversity isn't about filling quotas. "We don't do diversity just to tick a box. We ensure that

employees of all genders hold meaningful, customer-facing roles, not just back-office positions," Rajani explains. The company also hires across different cities, including Tier-2 regions, where the real hunger for growth is. "This not only strengthens our workforce but we are also in a way contributing to building our nation," she adds.

True inclusion means acknowledging the unique needs of employees. When Green Cell hired its first set of female coach captains (bus drivers), they realized that rigid scheduling didn't work for everyone. "Some women needed shift flexibility due to family commitments, and we accommodated that," Rajani shares. The company also provides support for employees undergoing gender transition, offering time off and necessary resources.

Beyond hiring, Green Cell ensures that safety and inclusivity remain a top priority. The company openly discusses POSH (Prevention of Sexual Harassment) beyond compliance to create a truly safe workspace. "At Green Cell, safety comes before revenue—whether it's road safety, employee well-being, or workplace security," she states. When onboarding LGBTQ+ employees, the company conducts awareness sessions to foster an inclusive culture. "I don't expect people's personal mindsets to change overnight, but professionally,



everyone must uphold a respectful and welcoming environment," Rajani asserts.

As a leader championing DEI, Rajani acknowledges the challenges but remains committed.

I do get pushback sometimes, but when I see employees feeling safe, valued, and growing in their careers, it's all worth it.

BUILDING TOMORROW'S LEADERS

As work models continue to evolve, Green Cell Mobility has evolved too. The company has employees across India, and even critical leadership roles are not bound to the corporate office. "For us, it's simple; you deliver. Where you deliver from is irrelevant," says Rajani. However, as a startup that thrives on cross-functional alignment, the key to success lies in constant communication. "We keep talking, we over-communicate, and we are transparent," she adds. Whether through online or offline sessions, Green Cell ensures that remote employees feel connected and engaged. "If things are going well, we say it. If things aren't great, we still communicate. Of course, we filter it based on what people can process, but our employees trust us because of this transparency, and that's something we've earned over the past five years."

When it comes to learning and development, Green Cell has a personalised approach. "We have people from top institutes, and we also have employees from non-traditional backgrounds. One-size-fits-all learning doesn't work for us, so we curate specialized paths for different employees," Rajani explains. Recognizing the growing need for expertise in electric mobility, the company partnered with IITs to develop academic courses on EV technology, long before the market even caught on.

The organization is committed to upskilling employees at every level. "We don't hesitate to invest in learning. We've even sent our lowest-ranked employees to China for hands-on experience," she says. Unlike companies that worry about employees leaving after training, Green Cell sees learning as an investment. "One of my previous employers once told me, 'Whatever good you teach will create goodwill for your organization.' I truly believe that," Rajani adds.

From Leadership Development Programs (LDPs) to Management Development Programs (MDPs), everything at Green Cell is curated to fit the company's

needs. "We don't pick up generic courses off the shelf. We bring in the right experts and tailor everything to our people. Every year, we ensure that each employee undergoes both skill-based and professional development training," she states.

A WORKPLACE THAT CARES

At Green Cell Mobility, employee well-being is paramount. Rajani, herself being a mindset and well-being coach, has worked around three core aspects of well-being: physical well-being, mental well-being, and financial well-being. They ensure that well-being is not limited to on-roll employees but extends to outsourced workers as well. "For us, there is no distinction, whether it's a corporate employee or a coach captain driving our most valuable asset, the bus, everyone's well-being matters." To support financial well-being, Green Cell educates employees on managing their money effectively. In terms of physical health, the company offers top-tier healthcare programs and Medi-Claim coverage for employees and their dependents.

Mental well-being is a major focus area, and Green Cell has a unique approach to it. "I personally conduct monthly sessions to help employees manage stress, whether it's peer pressure, family dynamics, or the challenges of working in a startup," says Rajani. The response has been overwhelmingly positive. "With our latest well-being series, nearly 98% of participation is voluntary, which speaks volumes about its impact."

The company's commitment to employee well-being was especially evident during the COVID-19 pandemic. Green Cell partnered with delivery partners to send well-being kits to affected employees and their families. Every individual received a personalized note of encouragement, ensuring they knew they were not alone. Even today, Green Cell goes beyond traditional benefits. If an employee or their dependent is facing a critical illness, the company provides counseling and support. "When an employee feels taken care of, when they know their workplace is a home away from home; that's what makes the difference," Rajani states.

THE ROAD AHEAD

"We have a crazy year ahead, crazy in terms of growth," says Rajani. The company is preparing for a massive expansion, not just doubling or tripling, but scaling up in a way that will redefine its presence in the industry. With multiple OEM partnerships, Green Cell is gearing up for new learnings. But amid this growth, they remain focused on people-centric policies, fair opportunities,



and an inclusive culture. "At Green Cell, we believe in transforming India's mobility landscape, providing delightful service to our passengers and guests," Rajani shares.

LEADERSHIP MANTRA

HRs play an important role in shaping an organisation, and for that, they must stay updated with the market trends, especially in the digital space. "You may believe in it or not, but you should be digitally aligned," Rajani says. Empathy and compassion are at the core of HR, along with trust. "There is no such thing as half trust or more trust—it's either trust or no trust. If you can't trust your people, how will you work?" She also highlights the importance of respect, stating, "You respect people, and 80% of the issues get sorted automatically."

For young women aspiring to build a career in HR, she stresses the need for empathy, subject expertise, and agility. "Your knowledge will help you prove that HR is not a back-end function. People stop reading too early these days, but continuous learning and adaptability are essential. Another thing that one should be is agile; if you're not agile, you'll become obsolete before you know it." She also advises being open to unlearning and relearning. "If you carry the baggage of 'I come from here, and I know it all,' you actually know nothing."