

Training at PCBL: Pragati for Progress

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Abstract

Ray, Chief manager (L&D and OD) at PCBL, was looking at the just received employee engagement survey results. While the loyalty of people as shown by the data was satisfactory, the awareness about vision, mission of the company at grass roots level had been a matter of real concern. Phillips Carbon Black Limited (PCBL) had been awarded with 'The Great Managers Award' by People Business and Times of India in the year 2016. Structured capability building programmes were being held continuously for the employees to achieve excellence within the organization. The firm had consistently increased its allocation to enhance the competency of its employees, through systematic training across the plants and regional offices, and ensured that its organizational goals were clear to every personnel in the team through various learning and development initiatives. However, employee survey results showed awareness and connect to the vision and mission of the company at a dismal 28 percent.

Key words: *training, employee engagement, company vision, company values*

Ray's Dilemma

Ray, Chief manager (L&D and OD) at PCBL, was looking at the just received employee engagement survey results. While the loyalty of people as shown by the data was satisfactory, the awareness about vision, mission of the company at grass roots level had been a matter of real concern. Phillips Carbon Black Limited(PCBL) had been awarded with 'The Great Managers Award' by People Business and Times of India in the year 2016. Journey of excellence within organization was continued with structured capability building programmes held continuously for the employees. The Company had steadily enhanced its investments to sharpen the capabilities of its people, through systematic interventions across the plants and regional offices, and ensured that its organizational goals were clear to every personnel in the team through various learning and

development initiatives. However, the survey results show awareness and connect to the Vision and mission of the company at a dismal 28 percent.

An Overview of Philips Carbon Black

Philips Carbon Black Ltd (PCBL), owed its origin to the Goenka Group of Industries. The Goenka Group, an established business house in India had several industries under its fold including Power, FMCG, Retail, Carbon Black: Media houses, Sports and the field of Education. In 1960, the PCBL was established as a collaborative venture with Phillips Petroleum of USA as Philips Carbon Black Limited(PCBL). They have since emerged as India's largest producer and exporter and as 7th largest producer of carbon black in the world (Exhibit II). The company had achieved this feat on the strength of their global presence,(Exhibit III), brand image, product customization and timely delivery while maintaining excellence in quality. The sales had increased 1.5 times from 2014 to 2018 (Exhibit V). Spanned across 45 countries worldwide the company resorted to healthy business practices implying ethical conduct, transparency and customer commitment adding tremendous value not only financially but also in building confidence and trust of the stakeholders.

The company produced carbon black for application in both rubber and non-rubber products. Carbon black was an elemental carbon used in rubber production in black granule form as a reinforcing agent. It was used also in a variety of products like plastics, coating, printing, inks, fibres and batteries.

PCBL served their customers with a number of products both in India and abroad. They had secured quality certification from ASTM (American Society for Testing and Materials) and USFDA (United States Food and Drug Administration) for plastics applications(like plastic trays and cutleries). 'Orient black' and 'Royale Black' were the two major brands of PCBL relating to Rubber black and Specialty black respectively. The other major players in the Indian markets are Hi-Tech (Aditya Birla Nuvo) and Cabot India (a subsidiary of Cabot Corporation).(Exhibit IV)

In India the company has four manufacturing facilities(Durgapur, Palej, Mundra, Kochi) with an installed capacity of 422,000 MT and a 76 MW capacity for power generation. PCBL is setting up a green field carbon black plant in Chennai and carbo chemical plant in Odisha, which going forward will further strengthen its geographical reach.(Exhibit I)

The company worked towards its vision of providing innovative solution as a reliable international player and an exciting workplace to its people.

The HR department has been created as a strategic business unit for procurement, maintenance and development of the people.

Human Resource Department at Philips Carbon Black

The HR Department was responsible for crafting and implementing policy decisions regarding recruitment, selection, training, compensation & benefits, performance management and retirement/exit of employees in a fair and equitable manner. As on March 2021 the employee distribution was as follows.

In PCBL the HR spearheaded Diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives in policy and practice. Equal Employment Opportunity was provided to all eligible persons irrespective of caste, religion, age, gender, race, creed, colour, differently challenged persons as per the law of the land. Individuals were treated with respect and dignity. Efforts were made to maintain a work culture and environment for employees to excel without discrimination of any kind while exercising their right to work in a professional manner. All employment and promotions are solely based on capability of the employee. Reasonable accommodations were made for Persons with Disability. Any form of harassment was strictly prohibited.

PCBL believed that growth can be sustained only if the people were geared to take challenges and perform with pride. Excellence in work were aligned to rewards and incentives. Maintaining harmonious industrial relations by recognizing the unions in designated factories, and employing the tools of collective bargaining, negotiation and conciliation whenever necessary were resorted to in the interest of industrial peace. This was further reinforced by a employment relations policy as per Indian labour law requirements.

Capability building of people happened to be one of the celebrated goals of PCBL. They respected the career aspirations, motivations and preferences of its people. They have steadily enhanced their investments to sharpen the capabilities of employees. Their interventions focused on aligning people capabilities with organizational objectives.

L & D Initiatives at PCBL

To realize the developmental goals of its 1000+ employees, PCBL has provided several learning platforms and programmes. As a manufacturing company it focused, technical, functional, safety and leadership development goals of the employees.

Virtual Gurukul was an online secured cloud-based platform for learning and development. The technical trainings were driven through this platform that was aimed at inculcating a self-learning culture at PCBL.

EMBARC PCBLite was a well-integrated, digitized onboarding programme for the new joiners, promoting awareness on the Group's legacy and values, ethics and code of conduct. This had proven to be an effective orientation process for incoming employees. PCBLite Leaders was designed as a workshop that focussed on capability building through the empowerment of senior functional leaders and enhancing their coaching abilities.

Safety training and awareness were conducted across manufacturing units to create utmost safeguard against accidents by improving safety standards and inducing required behavioural change.

Live Sampark was a connectivity building programme with the help of technology designed like a 'townhall'. Electronic connectivity to employees were ensued with the help internet on a real time basis. Leaders could address employees across the countries and across regions to communicate about the future plan, challenges of implementation. Performance review were also done and necessary feedback given for improvement. Team members clarify their doubts, give suggestions for improvement and share ideas in the forum. Leena AI was a chatbot developed from ensuring communication during the pandemic times.

Training Academy

PCBL's training academy at Palej was built to provide training to the new recruits. A structured curriculum was designed and training schedule set up for imparting training systematically. Both GETs (Graduate engineer trainees) and MTs(Management trainees) were given training in this academy since 2008. The training programme has been based on the 70:20:10 learning principle and is driven under the mentorship and guidance of the Principal, Training Academy, and the Reporting Manager.

The training programme is a year-long affair and is divided into three phases. After the classroom training, employees go through a rigorous five-month on-the-job training at their respective locations followed by live projects in the last phase. Trainees were required to work on a real business challenge and solve it. Mentors and Managers provide feedbacks on their performance which was shared with the trainees and improvement suggestions given by the Principal. Trainees also work side by side in shift activities of the plant to develop the necessary skills for independent handling of the responsibilities after training.

Nirantar Gyan Vardan Yojana: Learning from Experts

At PCBL they identify subject matter experts in house for different functional areas, to convert 'tacit knowledge' into 'explicit knowledge'. This transformation in knowledge was achieved with the help of subject matter content on equipment knowledge, maintenance activities, best practices and other relevant subjects. The training needs identification was done based on the organizational and task analysis through discussion with unit heads and functional heads. Monthly Training Calendar was available on the Learning Management System (LMS). The Company uses People Connect Platform as the host LMS powered by Success Factors.

Training Evaluation: Training evaluation in PCBL follows the levels of evaluation given by Kirkpatrick model. Evaluations of training at level one were done immediately after the programme by circulating a Feedback form to be filled by the trainees. Their immediate reaction were recorded and analysed for improvement. At Level two, learning gain were analysed by comparing a online pre and post training learning evaluation test. At level III, behavioural and performance changes at work was assessed by a systematic Post training behavioural impact study.

The Challenge: In the decade starting 2010, PCBL started facing competition from other Carbon Black producers due to opening up of the economy and foreign suppliers trying to do business in India. The domestic carbon black industry was impacted by a slowdown within the automobile sector as well as by the increasing dumping of carbon black into India by China and other countries. PCBL struggled to maintain its leading position due to tough competition from Chinese Companies in terms of product quality and quantity. (Exhibit IV). Traditional way of doing business seemed to be obsolete, employees seemed to be cut off from larger purpose of the Company and its business goals. In 2013 there was a change in leadership and Rishav Desai took over as the

Managing Director of the Company. He was well acquainted with the problem living through it and tried his best to revamp the Company. The transformation journey for the Company was initiated in 2013-14.

The first step was to align the employees by setting a shared vision for the Company. With this purpose a new vision statement was co-created by participation and involvement of 80 percent of the employees. This helped gain employee commitment to the vision (Exhibit VI).

Based on the vision PCBL People Philosophy aligned to the core values of the company (Exhibit VIII) was designed on the basis of five pillars of Leadership, Culture, Capability, Demography & Rewards (Exhibit VII)

Training Needs Analysis (TNA) was undertaken at organization level to find out the organization Performance Gap(OPG). The results of the TNA were the following:

- PCBL had a large set of new employee base who lacked awareness and understanding of the Vision statement
- The employee contribution and the business intention were having a gap. People were not able to clearly connect with the larger business objective (Mostly employees at the grass root level)
- Lot of interventions were planned and implemented but employee connect with the larger goal and vision of the company at grassroots level were non-existent.

The outcomes of TNA set the objective for the training programme to be designed. The programme would be designed to cover all employees in the organization. The aim was to make a planned intervention to align the employees to the vision and mission of the organization so that they can visualize the connect with the larger business goal.

The Programme

Meetings were called for by the HR department for brainstorming about the design of the programme. Decision was to be taken as regards name, duration of the programme, timeline for

execution, details of the content, launching & conduct of the programme. Line managers were hesitant for any programme longer than two days as it will affect plant operations. Keeping their concerns in mind, it was decided to design a workshop for one day to align the mind-set of the employees towards company's vision and business. The name of the programme was decided to be 'Pragati' meaning progress. The programme was to cover both the white collar and blue-collar employees across the organization. A countrywide launch was envisaged. This posed a number of challenges and Ray was at a fix as regards the design of the programme, its implementation and evaluation for effectiveness.

The comprehensive training plan encompassing all the three components: content, conduct and evaluation design needed to be prepared. The main considerations under each sub head were discussed below.

Content Design: Both content selection and content delivery had to be precise so as to effectively realize the training objectives. What topics to include, what methods to choose for maximum impact needed to be carefully crafted. In a multilevel programme holding the attention of participants consistently required use of appropriate learning theories, principles and methods. As blue-collar workers were there, connecting them to the program was important before giving information about big picture of the company, its competitors, and relevant data. It was necessary to make them change ready, so that they could adapt to the changing requirements, learn and deliver back home. Choice of content and proper sequencing were vital for success of the programme. Judicious use of learning theories, principles as they applied to the adults was the need of the hour.

Conduct Design: Once the content was ready, proper planning for seamless execution had to be done. The paramount challenge was to convince them to come to the programme. This required advance planning to be made in the following areas;

- Top management and Union support was needed to add credibility to the programme and ensure buy in.
- Managing the event in different places simultaneously also needed arrangement for venues and logistics.
- Cost of the programme needed to be estimated.
- Training the Trainers beforehand to be arranged

- Arranging for travel and transport for trainers and participants.

Evaluation Design: A systematic content design would include the design for evaluation. The objectives of evaluation were derived from the training objectives but the designers should also plan for deciding on the parameters of evaluation, and how to evaluate at different levels of evaluation.

Ray was overwhelmed by the enormity of the task. They had to design the programme in a month and execute within a year covering all employees.

*Names changed to maintain anonymity

Exhibits

Exhibit-I: PCBL Plant Locations

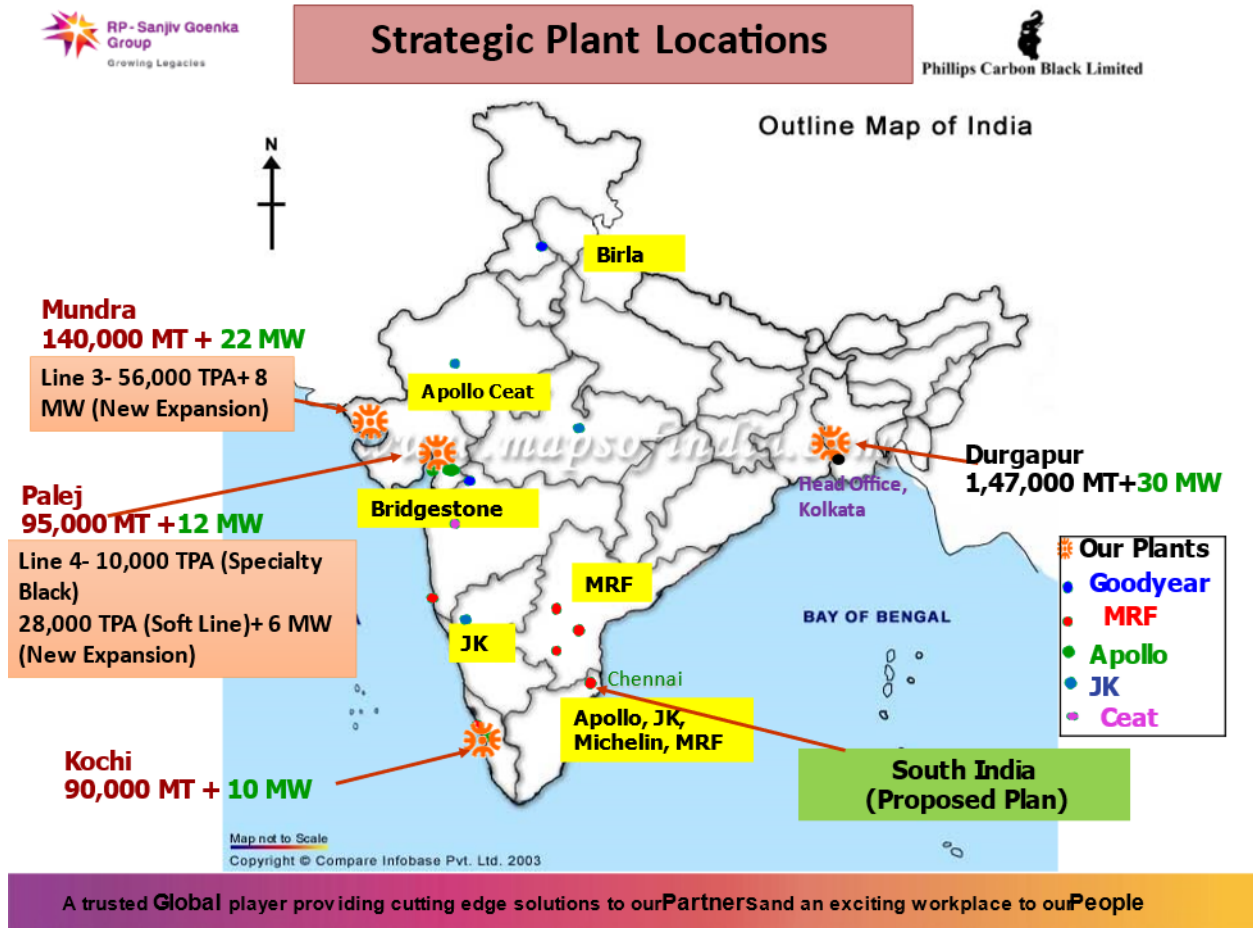




Exhibit-II : Overview of the company

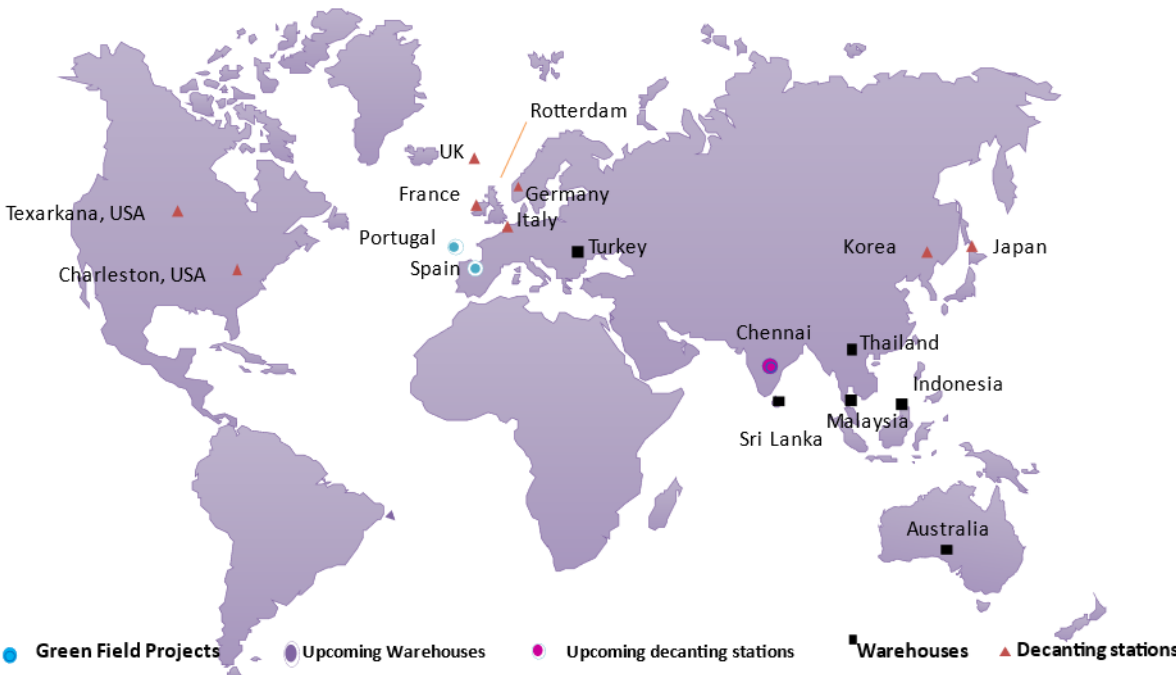
Overview		
 <p>Business</p> <p>Largest producer in India 6th largest globally</p>	 <p>CAPACITY</p> <p>Installed Capacity of 515 KT Co-Generation Power Plants of 76 MW</p>	 <p>CUSTOMER</p> <p>Global tyre companies and specialized application users (Paints, Inks, Plastics etc.)</p>
 <p>Market presence in 30+ countries</p>	 <p>CERTIFIED</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ISO/TS16949:2009 • ISO9001:2008 • ISO14001:2004 • OHSAS18001:2007 	 <p>STOCKS</p> <p>BSE (Code – 506590) NSE (PHILIPCARB)</p>
<p>A trusted Global player providing cutting edge solutions to our Partners and an exciting workplace to our People</p>		

Exhibit III : Chart showing International locations of PCBL



Global footprint Virtual Plant Concept

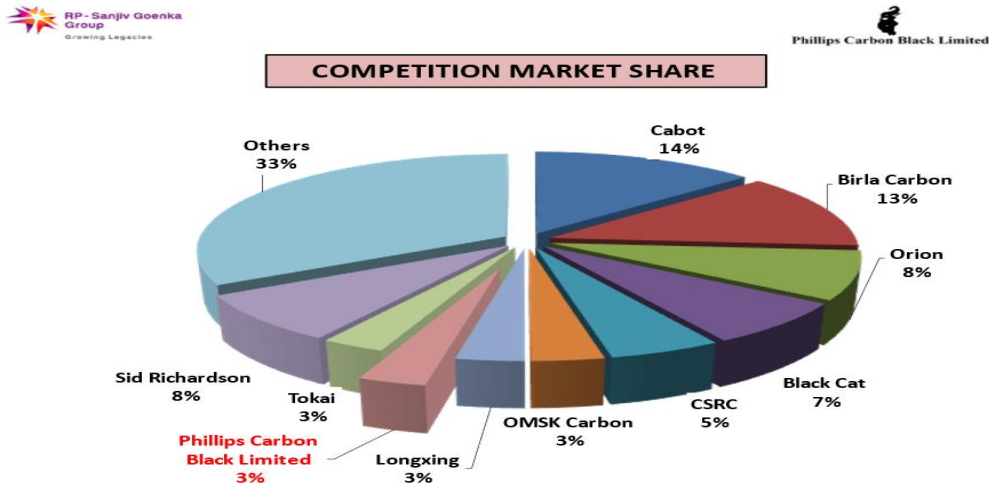




● Green Field Projects
■ Upcoming Warehouses
● Upcoming decanting stations
■ Warehouses
▲ Decanting stations

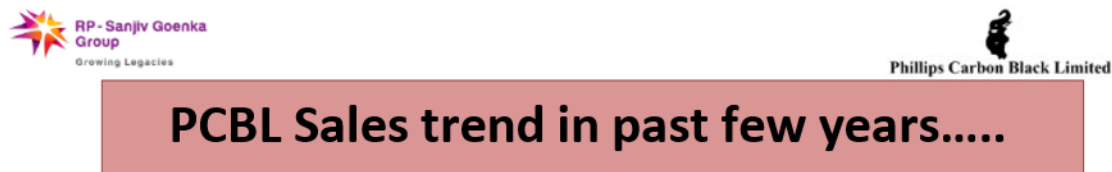
11 A trusted Global player providing cutting edge solutions to our Partners and an exciting workplace to our People

Exhibit IV: Figure showing market share



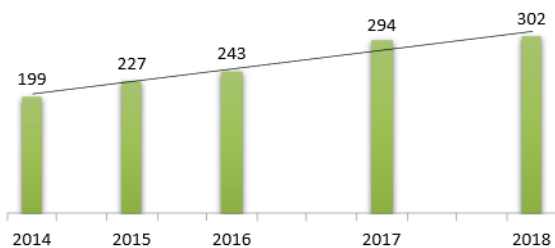
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Exhibit V: Sales Trends of PCBL

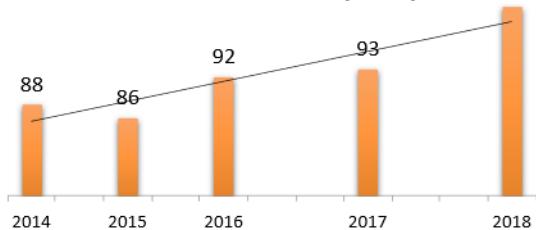


PCBL'S SALES TREND (IN KT)

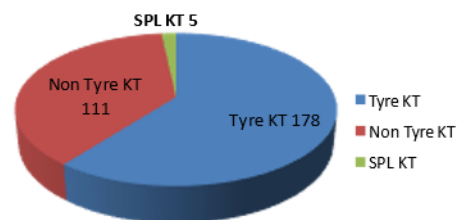
National Sales (in KT)



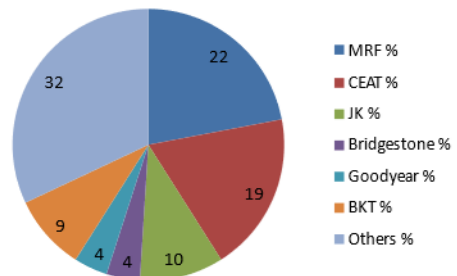
International Sales (in KT)



National - Segment wise Break up of 2017



National Customer wise- Breakdown



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Exhibit VI: Vision of PCBL

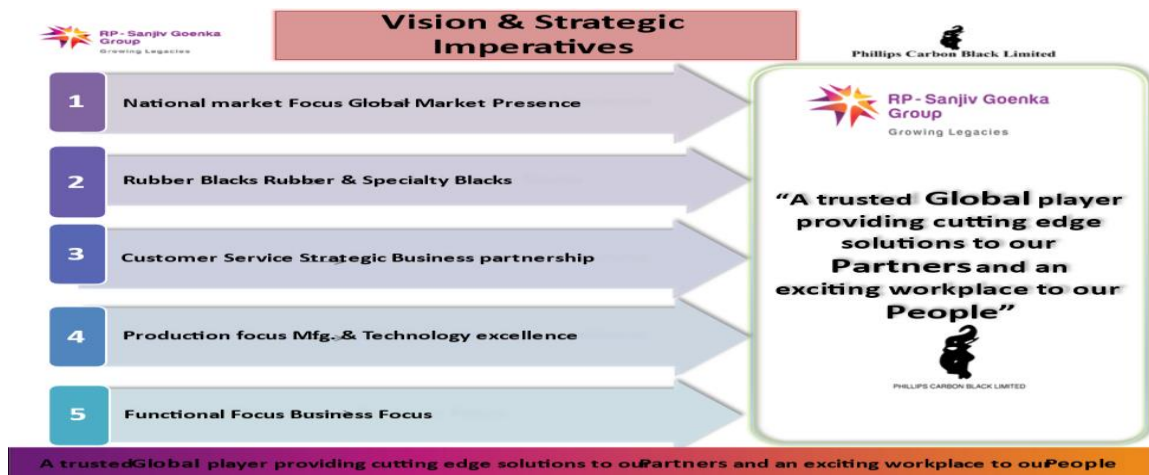
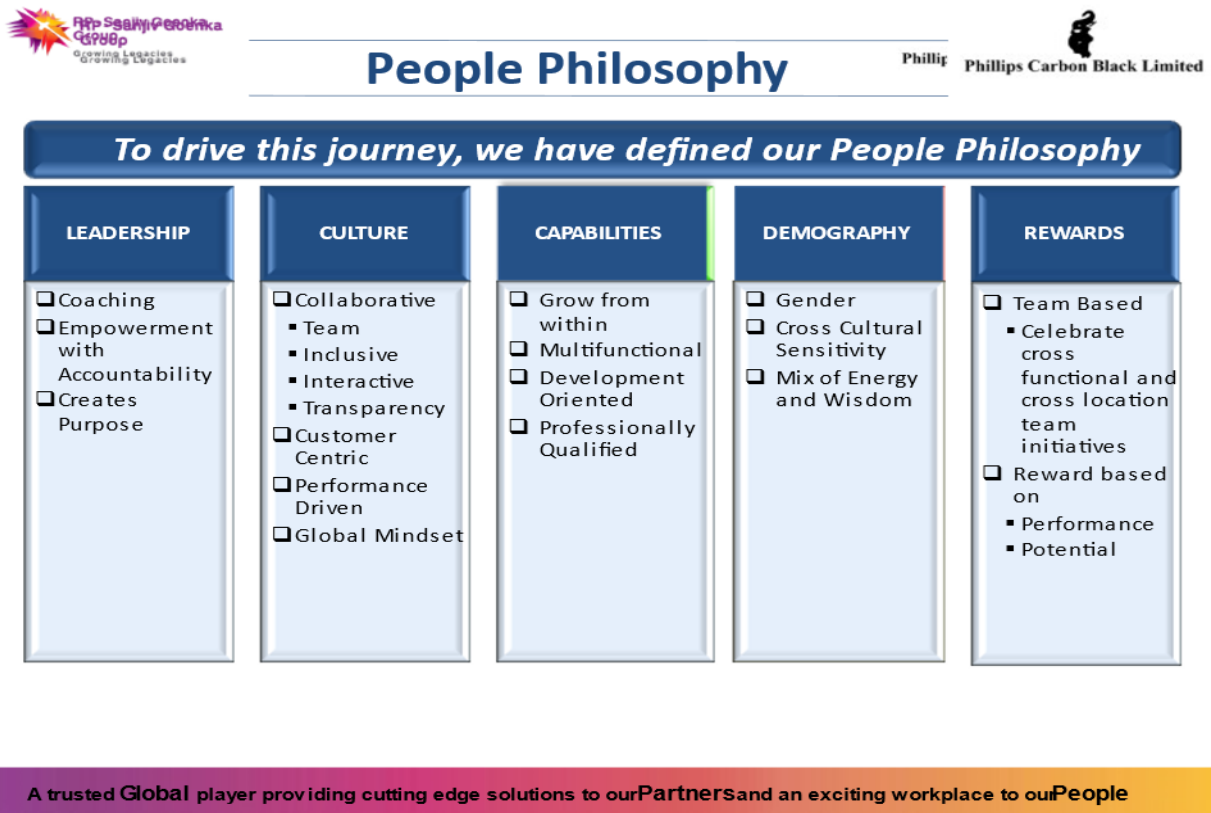


Exhibit VII: People Philosophy of PCBL



Employee Strength, PCBL

Total Managerial employees- 785,
 Non managerial employees-240,
 PWD -6, Women -50.
 Total 1025 as of March 2021

Exhibit VIII



PCBL CORE VALUES



CUSTOMER HAPPINESS

Bring a smile on the face of your customer



CREDIBILITY

Instill trust and confidence with your actions



HUMANENESS

Be Caring and Respectful to all



EXECUTION EXCELLENCE

Put your heart and soul into your actions



SPEED

Move ahead of time



RISK TAKING

Dare to go beyond

A trusted **G**lobal player providing cutting edge solutions to our**P**artners and an exciting workplace to our**P**eople