

International Journal of Research in Human Resource Management



E-ISSN: 2663-3361
P-ISSN: 2663-3213
IJRHRM 2024; 6(2): 261-263
www.humanresourcejournal.com
Received: 03-08-2024
Accepted: 11-09-2024

K Murugesan
Hindustan Aeronautics
Limited, CV Raman Nagar,
Bangalore, Karnataka, India

Embracing the power of multiskilling: A strategic imperative to enhance productivity at workplace

K Murugesan

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.33545/26633213.2024.v6.i2c.222>

Abstract

In today's dynamic and competitive landscape, organizations are constantly seeking ways to enhance efficiency, adaptability, and productivity. One strategy that has gained significant traction is Multiskilling - the practice of equipping employees with a diverse set of skills to perform multiple tasks or roles within the organization. In today's rapidly evolving business landscape, strategic agility is essential for organizational survival and growth. By embracing Multiskilling, organizations can unlock a myriad of benefits, including improved agility, enhanced problem-solving capabilities, and greater employee engagement. This paper aims to shed light on the transformative potential of Multiskilling and provide actionable insights for organizations looking to harness its power in today's complex business environment.

Keywords: Multiskilling, skills, productivity, agility, employee engagement

Introduction

Why Multi-Skilling?

In today's rapidly evolving business landscape, strategic agility is essential for organizational survival and growth. Multiskilling enables organizations to build agile, adaptable workforce capable of responding effectively to changing market conditions, technological disruptions, and competitive pressures. When employees are able to fulfill a larger number of responsibilities & functions across domains, it allows leaders to react quickly to issues as they arise. For employees, Multi-skilling provides an opportunity to expand their skill set which can lead to enhanced job satisfaction. It is useful in helping employees become more productive. It also provides variety for employees and prevents them from becoming stale in the role they originally were designated.

Objectives

1. Examine existing literature on Multiskilling and its impact on organizational performance and employee job satisfaction.
2. Discuss a case study on Multiskilling in Aircraft Manufacturing Industry

Literature Review

Numerous studies have highlighted the positive impact of Multiskilling on organizational performance metrics such as productivity, efficiency, and cost-effectiveness. For instance, research by Johnson *et al.* (2018) demonstrates that multiskilled employees are better equipped to adapt to changing work demands, leading to improved operational flexibility and resource utilization. Similarly, a meta-analysis conducted by Smith and Jones (2020) reveals a significant correlation between Multiskilling initiatives and enhanced organizational outcomes across various industries and sectors.

Multiskilling not only benefits organizations but also plays a crucial role in fostering employee development and engagement. By providing opportunities for skill diversification and cross-functional training, organizations can empower employees to expand their capabilities and pursue career advancement. This aligns with the findings of research conducted by Garcia and Martinez (2019), which emphasizes the positive relationship between Multiskilling programs, and employee job satisfaction, motivation, and retention. Moreover, multiskilled employees tend to experience higher levels of engagement and job enrichment due to the variety and autonomy inherent in their roles.

Corresponding Author:
K Murugesan
Hindustan Aeronautics
Limited, CV Raman Nagar,
Bangalore, Karnataka, India

According to a study by Chen and Wang (2017), organizations that embrace Multiskilling are better positioned to innovate, experiment, and seize emerging opportunities, thus gaining a competitive edge in their respective industries. Furthermore, multiskilled teams often exhibit higher levels of creativity and problem-solving ability, facilitating the generation of novel ideas and solutions.

Multiskilling

Understanding the Essence of Multiskilling

Multiskilling is a strategy that involves training and equipping employees to acquire additional skill sets in addition to those for which they were originally hired. It allows the employees to develop their abilities and be able to perform a wider range of functions and responsibilities. Multiskilling improves employee productivity as well as job satisfaction. Unlike specialization, where employees focus solely on one skill or job role, Multiskilling encourages individuals to expand their skill sets in a new job role in addition to their existing job role.

Multiskilling in Aircraft Manufacturing Industry

Aircraft Manufacturing Industry – An Overview

Aircraft manufacturing is characterized by advanced materials, high capital investment, sophisticated technology and long lead gestation cycles. It requires cutting-edge technology and engineering expertise to design, develop, and produce safe and efficient aircraft. The integration of advanced materials, avionics, propulsion systems, and aerodynamic designs adds layers of complexity to the manufacturing process. Moreover, the continuous evolution of technology necessitates ongoing research and development efforts to stay competitive and meet regulatory requirements. Thus, Aircraft Manufacturing is technology intensive and skill intensive in nature. Aircraft manufacturing requires a large and diverse skill sets ranging from advanced machining, sheet metal, composites,

structure, avionics, electrical, advanced welding etc.,

Why Multi-Skilling in Aircraft Manufacturing Industry?

In this backdrop, it is very pertinent that Multiskilling of work force can play a vital role in improving the productivity thereby reducing the cost of production to a greater extent. Multi-skilled workforce plays a crucial role in maintaining and advancing various aspects of aerospace engineering, manufacturing, maintenance, and operations. By equipping employees with diverse skill sets, including but not limited to avionics, propulsion, structures, and systems integration, organizations can optimize resource utilization, streamline production processes, and enhance overall efficiency. Multi-skilled employees are better positioned to adapt to evolving technologies, regulations, and market demands, thereby ensuring the industry's ability to innovate and remain at the forefront of technological advancements. Moreover, Multiskilling fosters a collaborative work environment where cross-functional teams can collaborate effectively on complex projects, leading to improved problem-solving, faster time-to-market, and superior product quality. Additionally, in an industry known for its stringent safety standards and rigorous regulatory requirements, multi-skilled workforce is better equipped to uphold compliance and mitigate risks. Overall, investing in Multiskilling not only strengthens the organizational capabilities but also contributes to the industry's continued growth, efficiency, and global competitiveness.

Multiskilling Methodology: Multiskilling starts with the identification of key skills on which people should be skilled. Selection of right set of people who are excelling in their current job roles and are ready to take up new skill sets is paramount. Hence, assessment of the existing skill levels of people is essential. The detailed Process of Multiskilling is depicted in the Schematic diagram below.

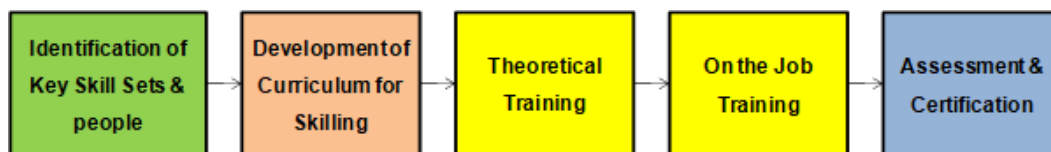


Fig 1: Schematic diagram for Multiskilling Process

Identification of Key Skill Sets & people

Aircraft Equipping Fitter Job role was identified as a key skill set for based on the assessment of skills shortage vis a –vis manpower deployment. Selection of people was done based on their skill levels in their existing Job role. People with skill levels of 4 & 5 were selected for Multiskilling. Skill levels chart is given below.

Table 1: Skill levels chart

Level
Needs Improvement
Inconsistent
Satisfactory
Highly Effective
Exceptional

Development of Curriculum for Skilling

Training Curricula was developed by domain experts for

Aircraft Equipping Fitter job role based on Work Instruction Manuals, SOPs, Technical Manuals and Part & Assembly drawings etc., Training for Multiskilling is imparted at two stages i.e., Theoretical Training and On the Job (OJT) Training.

Stage-1: Theoretical Training

Initially a basic foundation module was prepared on the Aircraft Equipping Fitter job role by domain experts. This will provide a comprehensive theoretical training on the new job role covering all concepts of the subject. Trainers utilize various teaching methods such as lectures, discussions, case studies, and group activities to engage participants and ensure effective learning. This training provided employees a sound theoretical knowledge on the new job role.

Stage-2: On the Job (OJT) Training: To impart the hard

skills, employees underwent On the Job (OJT) training at the actual work place/shop-floor to acquire practical skills and hands-on experience. This training was conducted in the actual work environment where employees performed their day to day work. Trainers demonstrated tasks, procedures, and techniques, and employees practiced under supervision to master the required skills. Employees were monitored till they gained proficiency in the new job.

Assessment

Post successful completion of both the trainings, employees

underwent an assessment process which consisted of two types of tests i.e., Theoretical test and Practical test. The main purpose of the assessment is to analyse the impact of the training on the skill and performance level of the employees.

In Theoretical test, the trainees' subject knowledge on the new Job role was tested. On the other hand, their ability to perform Installation of Mechanical & Electrical System was tested during the Practical test. An interview was also conducted to assess the overall skill level of the candidates.

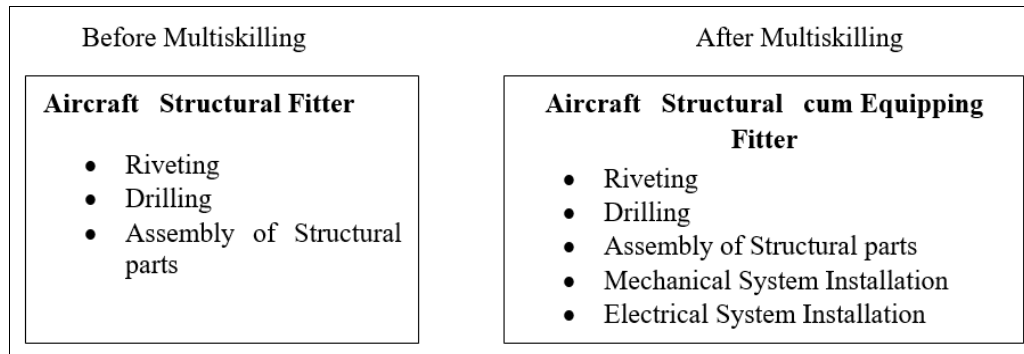


Fig 2: Comparison of Job Roles Before & After Multiskilling

Benefits of Multiskilling

- Enhanced Adaptability:** Multiskilled employees are better equipped to adapt to changing work environments and evolving job demands. They can seamlessly switch between tasks and roles, ensuring that the organization remains agile and can respond quickly to market shifts and unexpected challenges.
- Improved Productivity:** Multiskilling leads to increased efficiency and productivity. Employees with a broader skill set can fill in for absent colleagues or handle additional tasks during peak workloads, reducing the need for additional staff.
- Higher Job Satisfaction:** Employees appreciate the opportunity to learn new skills and take on diverse responsibilities. Multiskilling can lead to higher job satisfaction and motivation, reducing turnover rates and enhancing employee retention.
- Cross-Functional Collaboration:** Multiskilled employees are more likely to collaborate effectively across departments and teams. Their ability to understand various aspects of the business enables them to work together seamlessly, breaking down silos and fostering innovation.

Conclusion

In an increasingly competitive and dynamic work environment, Multiskilling has emerged as a vital strategy for organizations aiming to enhance flexibility, productivity, and resilience. This paper has explored the multifaceted benefits of Multiskilling, including improved workforce adaptability, reduced operational bottlenecks, and enhanced employee engagement. By equipping employees with diverse skill sets, organizations not only mitigate the risks associated with workforce fluctuations but also foster a culture of continuous learning and innovation. However, the successful implementation of Multiskilling programs requires careful planning and a supportive organizational culture. Challenges such as potential skill

dilution, increased training costs, and employee burnout must be addressed through strategic planning and continuous feedback mechanisms. Organizations must balance the need for flexibility with the need for specialization, ensuring that employees are not overburdened or underutilized.

In conclusion, while Multiskilling presents certain challenges, its benefits in fostering a versatile and resilient workforce far outweigh the drawbacks. As organizations continue to navigate the complexities of the modern business landscape, Multiskilling will undoubtedly remain a crucial component of human resource strategies.

References

- Multiskilling in construction - A strategy for stable employment by Irene Lill
- Multi-Skilling And Lifelong Learning and The Future of Work by Florence Olufunbi Ojo Posted: 27 Jun 2024
- Multiskilling and Firm Performance by Yong-Min Kim and Ki Seong Park
- The Effect of Using Multi-Skilled Workforce on the Flexibility of Project Resource Scheduling and Project Costs by Thulisile Manyi University of Kwazulu-Natal, Durban, Rosemary Sibanda University of Kwazulu-Natal, Durban, Ankit Katrodia University of Kwazulu-Natal, Durban
- Critical Literature Review of Labor Multiskilling in Construction January 2019 Journal of Construction Engineering and Management 145(1):04018113 145(1):04018113 Araz Nasirian, RMIT University, Associate Prof. Mehrdad Arashpour Monash University (Australia), Babak Abbasi
- Multi-skilling in scheduling problems: A review on models, methods and applications Behrouz Afshar-Nadjafi Computers & Industrial Engineering Volume 151, January 2021, 107004