



# The Sum Of HR Activities: 'Total'ly Cool

*With a robust and dynamic HR process in place, **SumTotal Systems, Inc.** is a company that is helping others strengthen learning and development, by ensuring that its own HR policies create benchmarks in the industry*

## Workplace Profile: SumTotal

A company that helps other companies strengthen their learning and development, talent development and performance management systems, would require a high quality of talent to sustain operations, and SumTotal is an example of such a scenario.

The creative 'We Care' team instituted by the company ensures that all chances to make employees feel special are utilised as and when they appear on the horizon. The HR team seeks to epitomise Indian culture through various celebrations and occasions.

New entrants are welcomed to the family with bunches of orange balloons at their workplaces. The welcome lunch, the office walkabout and the

team gathering in the evening are all activities aimed at making the first day a memorable one for new hires.

On birthdays, employees reach office to find cheerful yellow balloons, wishes from colleagues, a birthday cake, and gift cards waiting for them. Anniversaries call for red balloons, bouquets, sweets and a candlelight dinner for two at a 5-star hotel. An email wishing the employee is sent out and is copied to his/her manager and the team. Incidentally, this email sometimes serves as a reminder in case he/she has forgotten to wish his/her spouse before coming to work! The gifts and the dinner coupons make sure that the employee goes back home with a smile. Those on the marriage path are not left too far behind - they are treated with microwave ovens as wedding gifts. For

weddings being held in Hyderabad, a whole contingent is sent to help out with the preparations, while for out-of-town weddings, at least one team member's presence is ensured with the company paying the bill for transport and lodging. The entry of a baby in the employee's life is celebrated with a large SumTotal teddy bear that holds up an orange heart. Alongside, each additional year spent at the company by an employee is marked by further pampering in the form of gifts!

Since 2005, the company has worked around themes (called *Synergy*) that it incorporates into each of its activities for that year. For example, 2005 was the year of the family, while 2006 celebrated the cultures and diversity within the states of India. 2007 focused on the environment and the underprivileged,



A Greener Tomorrow helped save paper

while 2008 was devoted to employee health and wellness. The theme for 2009 relates to leisure and hobbies.

SumTotal credits the families of its employees for their unstinted support and cooperation behind the success of the company. There has been a constant focus on bringing the company closer to this "extended family". The 'Synergy Utsav', held annually, is a gala celebration of their togetherness and bonding.

In 2005, a suburban resort was re-decorated with a village setting, as part of the Synergy family theme. Teams and their families had fun participating in bullock cart racing, exchange of 'gula' (colour), fireworks, kite flying and dancing, coupled with 'dhaba' food. The older employees recollected tales about their childhood and shared them with others.

In 2006, Synergy was built around the Hawaiian theme, while 2007 focussed on films. However, the 2008 Synergy celebrations were the grandest, as the theme revolved around Indian weddings, and 120 out of the 350 employees performed on stage along with their spouses.

SumTotal greatly appreciates and values Indian culture. Every festival is celebrated joyously, through decorations, special lunches and cultural activities. This is supposed to signify

the unity present amongst the diversity within the company and the country itself. Employees pay special tributes to India on Republic day and Independence Day through heartfelt performances, depicting high levels of patriotism.

In fact, in 2006, the company showcased the various Indian states by inviting the employees to showcase events depicting the culture, food, festivals, dances, music, and art in their native states. The showcase months were chosen on basis of upcoming festivals. For example, Punjabis led the celebrations in January with Lohri and Baisakhi.

The programme called 'Total Commitment' is SumTotal's way of supporting the underprivileged. This is not just done through donations in cash and kind, but also by purchasing greeting cards that support charitable causes, feeding the poor, and aiding blind children in putting up cultural programmes. Working with a government school, employees identified the needs for electrification in classrooms, building protective walls, painting the teaching areas, providing computers, etc. Most importantly, employees realised the value of time spent in such initiatives. Just 4 hours spent at an old age home helped employees empathise with the elder citizens, especially once they found out how many of them have been driven out of their well-to-do households. By spending a few hours, employees are able to share their pain, ease their hearts, and earn some smiles and a lot of blessings. Dhananjaya Deevi, Senior Tech Support Engineer, says, "SumTotal has a great culture. I am really proud of the fact that all employees work as one family towards social service. The feeling of 'social responsibility' is inculcated within every employee."

Another very popular campaign at SumTotal was called 'Free The Left Lane', and it was started by one employee who took the initiative of unclogging the very busy traffic hurdle at a popular crossroad. This particular junction caused long delays every

morning. However, through the month-long 'Free the Left Lane' programme, 10 employees worked on a rotational basis for 2 hours every day, educating motorists and helping ease the traffic situation.

This move was so successful that it was applauded directly by the traffic police. Thereafter, the baton was handed over to other companies like Oracle and CSC, which took the endeavour forward.

'A Greener Tomorrow' was another in-house initiative launched to build awareness about the need for environmental conservation. Employees participated in awareness drives to help save power, paper, water and fuel. The company invested in greening initiatives, and provided employees with free pollution checks and facilities for recycling paper.

