

# Green HRM: Sustainable Hr Practices That Foster Environmental Consciousness

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## I. INTRODUCTION

The Green Awakening (Or Why Your HR Department Needs a Personality Transplant)

Let's be honest: for decades, HR departments have been the corporate equivalent of that one friend who reminds you about your expense reports at 11 PM on a Friday. Useful? Sure. Exciting? About as thrilling as watching paint dry—ironically, a process that happens to emit volatile organic compounds that deplete the ozone layer.

But here's the plot twist nobody saw coming: Green Human Resource Management (Green HRM) has emerged from the bureaucratic shadows, and it's demanding that organizations treat the planet with the same obsessive attention they give to quarterly earnings calls.

As Deloitte so eloquently puts it: *"For true sustainability, organizations need to create value for all people connected to them"* Deloitte Insights. Translation: Stop treating sustainability like a corporate hobby, and start treating it like the existential crisis it actually is.

## II. THE OZONE DEPLETION REALITY CHECK

Why Manufacturing Industries Should Be Sweating (More Than They Already Are)

Before we dive into the HR fairy dust, let's talk about the elephant in the room—or rather, the hole in the ozone layer. Manufacturing industries, particularly FMCG, textiles, paints, chemicals, and adhesives, have been treating the atmosphere like a personal dumping ground for decades.

Here's a sobering statistic: *India has reduced Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions by 465 million tonnes CO2 equivalent* in its quest to phase out Ozone Depleting Substances (ODS) Factchecker. That's the

equivalent of taking approximately 100 million cars off the road. Impressive? Absolutely. But here's the kicker: we've only just begun.

The manufacturing sector, particularly the chemical-laden industries we mentioned, has been pumping out chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs), hydrochlorofluorocarbons (HCFCs), and other alphabet-soup chemicals that sound like rejected Scrabble words. These substances don't just disappear—they linger in the stratosphere, breaking down ozone molecules like a toddler dismantling a Lego tower.

The consequences? Let's count the ways Mother Nature is plotting her revenge:

### 1. Agricultural Apocalypse:

Ground-level ozone reduces crop yields by 5-15% for sensitive crops USDA NRCS. In India alone, ozone-induced crop damage is sufficient to feed 94 million people AGU Journals. So the next time someone tells you environmental regulations hurt business, remind them that famines aren't exactly great for GDP either.

### 2. Health Havoc:

Increased UV radiation leads to higher rates of skin cancers, cataracts, and immune suppression Colorado Department of Public Health. Nothing says "employee wellness program" like melanoma, right?

### 3. Ecosystem Erosion:

Forests become more susceptible to drought, wind throw, and insect attacks. Because apparently, we haven't learned that trees are kind of important for that whole "breathing" thing.

### III. WHAT IS GREEN HRM? (OR: HOW TO MAKE YOUR WORKFORCE GIVE A DAMN)

Green HRM is essentially the practice of embedding environmental sustainability into every HR function—from recruitment to retirement. Think of it as giving your HR department an eco-friendly software update. According to research published in *Sustainability*, Green HRM involves "aligning recruitment, training, performance management, and other HR functions with the organization's sustainability objectives" MDPI Sustainability.

The framework typically includes five core components:

1. Green Recruitment and Selection: Hiring people who actually care about the planet
2. Green Training and Development: Teaching employees how to be eco-friendly without being preachy
3. Green Performance Management: Measuring environmental contributions alongside profit margins
4. Green Compensation and Benefits: Paying people to save the world (what a concept!)
5. Green Employee Relations: Creating a culture where sustainability isn't just a poster on the wall

As the research notes: "GHRM allows companies to achieve tangible benefits beyond improving the image and strengthening the brand among stakeholders" MDPI Sustainability. In other words: it's good for the planet AND your bottom line. Revolutionary, we know.

### IV. THE ESG-HR CONNECTION

When Compliance Met Conscience and Had a Beautiful Baby  
Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) criteria have become the corporate world's favorite acronym—right after ROI, EBITDA, and "WTF just happened in that meeting." But here's what most companies miss: *HR is not a support function in ESG. HR is the operating system that makes ESG work* LinkedIn - Govardhanan MG.

The three pillars of ESG break down beautifully when viewed through an HR lens:

**Environmental:** HR can drive eco-friendly behaviors through recruitment, training, and incentives. Want to reduce your carbon footprint? Start by hiring people who know what a carbon footprint actually is.

**Social:** This is HR's home turf—diversity, equity, inclusion, labor practices, and community engagement. The "S" in ESG is basically HR's entire job description with extra paperwork.

**Governance:** HR plays a critical role in ethical leadership, compliance training, and whistleblower protection. Because nothing says "good governance" like not getting indicted.

### V. TYPES OF GREEN HRM PRACTICES

**A Practical Guide for the Perplexed**  
Let's break down the specific practices that make Green HRM actually work, with examples that don't require a PhD in Environmental Science.

**1. Green Recruitment and Selection**  
**The Practice:**  
Instead of hiring the person with the most impressive LinkedIn profile, hire the person who also understands that single-use plastics are the devil incarnate.

**Real Example:**  
Unilever has pioneered "green job descriptions" that incorporate sustainability criteria into recruitment processes. They've realized that if you want to change the world, you need to hire people who actually want to change the world *International Journal of Innovative Research in Management Studies*.

**Actionable Step:**  
Include environmental competency requirements in job descriptions for all roles, not just "Sustainability Manager." Even your accountants should understand that paperless invoicing isn't just convenient—it's necessary.

**2. Green Training and Development**  
**The Practice:**  
Teaching employees about environmental goals, waste reduction, and energy-efficient operations. Because you can't expect people to save the planet if they don't know how.

**Real Example:**

Many ISOS 14001-certified companies in Portugal have created "sustainability academies" with mandatory environmental onboarding for new hires MDPI Sustainability. New employees learn about biodiversity, waste separation, and resource consumption before they even learn where the coffee machine is.

**Actionable Step:**

Develop environmental management training modules for all employees, not just the ones in hazmat suits. Include gamification—because nothing motivates like the crushing defeat of losing to Karen from Accounting in the "Who Can Reduce the Most Waste This Month" competition.

**3. Green Performance Management**

**The Practice:**

Integrating environmental criteria into employee evaluations. Because what gets measured gets managed, and what gets rewarded gets repeated.

**Real Example:**

Unilever has embedded sustainability metrics into Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). Managers are evaluated not just on commercial outcomes but also on contributions to energy savings, waste reduction, and supply chain sustainability International Journal of Innovative Research in Management Studies.

**Actionable Step:**

Include environmental performance metrics in annual reviews. If an employee exceeds their sustainability targets, give them the same recognition you'd give for exceeding sales targets. The planet doesn't care about your quarterly earnings, but it will notice if you reduce your waste by 20%.

**4. Green Compensation and Benefits**

**The Practice:**

Providing financial incentives and non-monetary recognition for eco-friendly behaviors. Because people are motivated by money, but also by being publicly praised as the "Green Champion."

**Real Example:**

Companies in the study by MDPI offered "monetary rewards for top-level management linked to

sustainability goals" and "non-monetary recognition such as praising the 'most ecological worker'" MDPI Sustainability. Some even provided discounts on electric bicycles—because nothing says "we care about the environment" like subsidizing your commute.

**Actionable Step:**

Create a "Green Bonus" structure. If an employee's team reduces energy consumption by X%, they get Y% bonus. It's not bribery if it's for the greater good.

**5. Green Organizational Culture**

**The Practice:**

Fostering a workplace culture that encourages eco-friendly behaviors and open communication about environmental initiatives.

**Real Example:**

Tata Steel, one of India's most iconic manufacturing companies, has implemented "agile working models" that include flexi work from home and absolute work from home options. This isn't just about employee convenience—it's about reducing commuting emissions Tata Steel.

**Actionable Step:**

Establish "Green Councils" or sustainability committees with employee representation. Let employees propose initiatives and vote on environmental projects. Democracy isn't just for elections—it's for deciding whether to install solar panels or a composting system.

**VI. INDIAN AND GLOBAL CASE STUDIES**

**The Good, The Bad, and the "At Least They're Trying"**

**Tata Steel: The Pioneer with a Pension for Green**

Tata Steel is basically the grandparent of Indian corporate sustainability—offering benefits before they were legally required, like some kind of industrial benevolent dictator. They introduced the 8-hour work day in 1912, implemented Leave with Pay in 1936, and established the Workers Provident Fund Scheme in 1920 Tata Steel.

But their modern Green HRM practices are equally impressive:

- Flexible Work Arrangements: Flexi work from home and absolute work from home options reduce commuting emissions
  - Employee Well-being Programs: They measure stress, happiness, and purpose—because a burnt-out employee isn't going to care about recycling
  - Childcare Facilities: Company-run creche facilities and support for primary caregivers
  - Second Career Program: Enabling women who took career breaks to return to the corporate world
- Their employee survey revealed that *80% of employees feel they make a difference in their roles, and 81% believe their work has special meaning beyond just being a job* Tata Steel. When your employees feel like they're contributing to something meaningful, they're more likely to embrace sustainability initiatives.

Hindustan Unilever: The FMCG Giant with a Green Conscience

Hindustan Unilever (HUL) has embedded sustainability across its value chain, focusing on climate, nature, plastics, and livelihoods. Their Business Responsibility & Sustainability Report adheres to the nine principles of the SEBI framework on sustainability HUL.

Their key initiatives include:

- Net Zero Emissions: Ambition to deliver net zero emissions across their value chain
- Plastic Waste Management: End-to-end plastic waste management, including reduction, circulation, and collaboration
- Regenerative Agriculture: Working with farmers to promote sustainable agricultural practices
- Livelihoods: Ensuring decent livelihoods for people in their value chain

What makes HUL's approach noteworthy is that they've integrated sustainability into their core business strategy, not treated it as a peripheral CSR activity.

Unilever Global: The Gold Standard of Green HRM  
Unilever's Sustainable Living Plan (USLP) effectively embedded sustainability into the core of the organizational culture. The company ensures that sustainability is reflected in every stage of the employee lifecycle—from green job descriptions to sustainability training to performance

incentives International Journal of Innovative Research in Management Studies.

The results? *Enhanced employee engagement, reduced operational costs through energy and waste efficiency, improved employer branding, and lower turnover rates.* When employees feel that their personal values align with corporate sustainability goals, they stick around.

## VII. WHAT THE CONSULTING BIGSHOTS SAY: WISDOM FROM THE IVORY TOWERS

When the consulting firms speak, corporations listen—mostly because they're paying exorbitant fees for the privilege. Here are some nuggets of wisdom from the big three:

Deloitte: The Human Element

*"For true sustainability, organizations need to create value for all people connected to them"* Deloitte Insights.

Deloitte's research shows that 69% of employees want their companies to invest in sustainability efforts Deloitte Insights. If you're ignoring sustainability, you're basically ignoring the majority of your workforce. Good luck with retention.

Gartner: The Culture Gap

*"Only 16% of employees say their organization currently has the knowledge, mindset and behaviors needed for a strong culture of sustainability"* Gartner. But here's the kicker: If organizations get it right, a strong culture of sustainability can improve employee engagement by up to 43% Gartner.

Let that sink in. 43% improvement in employee engagement. For context, most companies would sell their entire office furniture for a 5% improvement.

McKinsey: The Growth Imperative

*"Growth is necessary for organizations and economies to survive and thrive, and the future of growth must be both sustainable and inclusive"* McKinsey.

McKinsey's 2025 HR Monitor Survey reveals that offer acceptance rates are low (56%), 18% of new hires leave during their probationary period, and overall hiring success stands at just 46% in Europe McKinsey.

Translation: Talent is scarce, picky, and has options. And increasingly, talent wants to work for companies that aren't actively destroying the planet.

### VIII. ACTIONABLE GREEN HRM PRACTICES

What Industries Should Have Done Yesterday (But Can Still Do Today)

Let's get specific. Here are the practices that manufacturing industries—particularly FMCG, textiles, paints, chemicals, and adhesives—should implement immediately:

For FMCG Companies

What You Should Do:

- Implement green procurement policies. If your suppliers aren't sustainable, neither are you.
- Train sales teams on the environmental benefits of your products. They can't sell what they don't understand.
- Incentive programs for reducing packaging waste. Because "reduce, reuse, recycle" isn't just a kindergarten mantra.

What You Probably Did Instead:

- Greenwashing campaigns that cost more than actual sustainability initiatives
- Plastic packaging because it's cheaper, consequences be damned
- Treating sustainability as a marketing exercise rather than an operational imperative

For Textile Companies

What You Should Do:

- Adopt ozone-based textile processing. It reduces water and energy consumption, minimizes chemical usage, and leaves zero toxic by-products ATIRA.
- Train employees on eco-friendly dyeing and finishing techniques. Synthetic dyes aren't just bad for the environment—they're bad for your workers' health too.
- Implement water recycling systems. The fashion industry is the second-largest water consumer in the world. Do your part to change that.

What You Probably Did Instead:

- Continued using toxic dyes because they're cheaper

- Ignored the fact that textile processing is responsible for 20% of global water pollution
- Pretended that "organic cotton" labels absolve you of all other environmental sins

For Paints and Chemicals Companies

What You Should Do:

- Phase out volatile organic compounds (VOCs) in your products. India has already phased out HCFC-141b, one of the most potent ozone-depleting chemicals PIB. Follow suit.
- Implement strict safety and environmental training for all employees. Chemical spills aren't just bad for the environment—they're bad for your insurance premiums too.
- Establish green supply chain partnerships. Your raw materials shouldn't cost the earth—literally.

What You Probably Did Instead:

- Continued using ozone-depleting substances because alternatives "cost too much"
- Treated environmental regulations as obstacles rather than minimum standards
- Calculated that fines for violations are cheaper than compliance (spoiler: they're not, especially when you factor in reputational damage)

For Adhesives Companies

What You Should Do:

- Develop water-based adhesives to replace solvent-based ones. VOCs in adhesives are a major source of ozone-depleting emissions Heley Adhesive.
- Train R&D teams on sustainable product development. Innovation isn't just about performance—it's about planetary boundaries.
- Implement closed-loop manufacturing processes. Waste isn't waste if you can reuse it.

What You Probably Did Instead:

- Continued using toxic solvents because "that's how we've always done it"
- Ignored the health impacts on workers exposed to hazardous chemicals
- Pretended that "industrial-grade" is a synonym for "necessary-evil-grade"

## IX. MANAGERIAL IMPLICATION

### How to Not Mess This Up

If you're a manager or leader in a manufacturing organization, here are the key implications for your role:

#### 1. Leadership Modeling

You can't expect employees to embrace sustainability if you're flying private jets to climate conferences. Senior management must model eco-friendly behavior International Journal of Innovative Research in Management Studies.

This means:

- Actually, using the recycling bins (and knowing what goes in them)
- Taking public transportation or carpooling when possible
- Making sustainability a regular agenda item in meetings, not just an annual CSR report checkbox

#### 2. Communication and Transparency

Involving employees in co-defining what sustainability means for the organization is critical Gartner.

Don't just dictate from the top. Ask employees:

- What environmental issues matter most to them?
- What changes would they like to see in the workplace?
- How can they contribute to sustainability goals?

#### 3. Training and Development

Only 31% of employees say their organization provides resources to support ESG goals Gartner.

This is a massive gap. Invest in:

- Environmental awareness training for all employees
- Specialized training for roles with significant environmental impact
- Leadership development programs that include sustainability competencies

#### 4. Performance and Incentives

What gets measured gets managed, and what gets rewarded gets repeated.

Integrate environmental metrics into performance evaluations. If a manager exceeds their sustainability

targets, they should be rewarded just as they would be for exceeding financial targets.

#### 5. Culture Change

Building a culture of sustainability isn't a one-time initiative—it's a continuous process.

According to research, Green HRM helps increase customer and worker retention, "especially from new generations" MDPI Sustainability. Younger employees aren't just looking for a paycheck—they're looking for purpose. Give it to them.

## X. CONCLUSION

The Green HR Revolution is Here (And It's Not Optional)

Let's be clear: Green HRM isn't a nice-to-have anymore. It's a must-have. The ozone layer isn't going to heal itself just because you posted an Earth Day Instagram story. Manufacturing industries—particularly FMCG, textiles, paints, chemicals, and adhesives—have a disproportionate impact on the environment, and therefore a disproportionate responsibility to fix it.

But here's the silver lining: *Green HRM isn't just good for the planet—it's good for business.* It improves employee engagement, reduces turnover, enhances employer branding, and can even reduce operational costs through energy and waste efficiency.

As the research shows: "The company's green awareness promotes employee well-being" MDPI Sustainability. And happy employees are productive employees.

So, the next time someone in your organization asks, "Why should we invest in Green HRM?", you can answer: "Because 69% of our employees want us to, because it can improve engagement by 43%, and because the alternative is watching the planet burn while we update our LinkedIn profiles with 'Thoughts and prayers for the environment.'"

The choice is simple: Adapt your HR practices to embrace sustainability, or watch your best talent walk to competitors who already have. The planet doesn't care about your quarterly earnings, but your employees do—and increasingly, they care about the planet too.

*Now go forth and green your HR. The ozone layer is counting on you.*