

HRKatha Launches India's First Recognition Programme Exclusively for Emerging HR Leaders

Category: Business

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In a bold departure from conventional industry recognition, HRKatha, India's leading HR publication, today announced the launch of the HRKatha Rising Star Leadership Awards – the country's first awards programme designed exclusively to celebrate emerging talent in human resources.

The groundbreaking initiative challenges the long-held industry belief that leadership recognition should correlate with years of service, instead focussing on impact, innovation, and the potential to reshape India's HR landscape.

*"The HR profession has evolved dramatically, and we need recognition platforms that reflect this transformation," said **Prajjal Saha, Founder & Editor of HRKatha.** "These awards aren't about celebrating past achievements – they're about identifying the leaders who will shape the future of work in India. We're looking for professionals who think differently, act boldly, and create lasting impact regardless of their years in the industry."*

A response to industry transformation

The awards programme emerges at a critical juncture for Indian HR. Digital transformation, artificial intelligence integration, and evolving workforce expectations have fundamentally altered the profession's landscape. Yet traditional recognition systems have remained anchored in outdated paradigms that privilege tenure over innovation.

Consider the profound shifts witnessed across Indian organisations: the rise of people analytics transforming decision-making, AI revolutionising talent acquisition processes, employee experience emerging as a strategic discipline, and diversity and inclusion evolving from compliance function to business imperative. These transformations weren't driven by decades-old playbooks but by professionals willing to challenge conventional wisdom and experiment with new approaches.

The HRKatha Rising Star Leadership Awards recognises this reality, celebrating seven distinct categories that represent both current excellence and future potential in HR:

- **HR Tech Innovator:** Professionals leveraging technology to solve complex people challenges
- **Talent Acquisition Expert:** Those redefining organisational attraction and hiring strategies
- **Diversity & Inclusion Champion:** Leaders creating truly inclusive workplaces
- **Employee Experience Architect:** Professionals crafting engaging employee journeys
- **Organisational Change Leader:** Those navigating transformation with excellence
- **HR Business Partner of the Year:** Masters of translating people strategy into business results
- **Emerging HR Leader:** Early-career professionals demonstrating exceptional promise

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Industry veterans champion fresh perspective

The programme's credibility stems from its distinguished jury

panel, comprising CEOs and CHROs with over 350 years of combined experience across diverse industries. Their enthusiasm for recognising emerging talent reflects a broader industry acknowledgment that innovation often comes from unexpected places.

*"Delighted to be part of the HRKatha Rising Star Leadership Awards with such a stellar panel," said **Sandip Ghose, MD & CEO, Birla Corporation Ltd.** "HR has changed in a way we could not have imagined even a few years ago. So, greatly looking forward to the ideas the young trailblazers bring to the table. Sure, it is going to be an enriching experience for the jury as well."*

Praveen Purohit, Deputy CHRO, Vedanta Group, echoed this sentiment, *"Superb opportunity to showcase best practices and leadership that can inspire many more to rise in time to come. For now, 'own your rise'! I look forward to seeing some of the motivating entries along with my other jury colleagues."*

A stellar jury panel

Sandip Ghose (MD & CEO, Birla Corp)

Harit Nagpal (CMD, Tata Play)

Ramesh Mitragotri (Group Executive President – HR, Aditya Birla Group)

Ashwani Prashara (CHRO, Hydrocarbons, Reliance Industries)

Saba Adil (CHRO, Edelweiss Life Insurance)

Praveen Purohit (Dy CHRO, Vedanta Group)

Ayush Gupta (Director – HR, GAIL India)

Subir Verma (Executive Director & CHRO – Power Business, RP Sanjiv Goenka Group)

Vinay Ranjan (Director HR, Coal India)

Rajorshi Ganguli (President & Global CHRO, Alkem Laboratories)

Pooja Minocha (CHRO, Bata India)

Rupesh Tripathi (Head People, Performance & Culture, KPMG)

Defining the Rising Star mindset

What distinguishes a rising star from traditional HR professionals According to the programme's framework, it's not about having all the answers but asking better questions. It's not about following established processes but improving them. It's not about managing people but inspiring them to achieve their potential whilst driving organisational success.

Rising stars share distinct characteristics: comfort with ambiguity, embracing technology as an enabler rather than threat, understanding evolving employee needs and adapting accordingly, and measuring success not just in metrics but in meaningful human outcomes.

"Rising stars understand that HR is no longer a support function – it's a strategic differentiator," explains Saha. "In an economy increasingly driven by talent, knowledge, and innovation, HR professionals hold the keys to organisational success. Rising stars embrace this responsibility and leverage it to drive meaningful change."

Building a community of change-makers

Beyond individual recognition, the awards programme aims to build a community of forward-thinking professionals who will collectively shape India's future of work. Winners won't merely receive recognition – they'll join an exclusive network of innovators, change-makers, and visionaries.

This community approach addresses a critical industry need. When rising stars connect, collaborate, and share insights, the entire profession benefits. The programme creates a platform for cross-pollination of ideas, peer learning, and

collective advancement.

Industry impact and expectations

As nominations open for the inaugural awards, organisers anticipate discovering transformative stories across Indian organisations. Expected entries include professionals who have transformed recruitment processes using AI, created inclusive cultures in traditionally homogeneous industries, designed employee experiences that rival consumer brands, and led organisational changes that seemed impossible just years ago.

The traditional HR career path – starting at entry level and slowly climbing hierarchy over decades – is giving way to a more dynamic model where impact and innovation can accelerate advancement. The HRKatha Rising Star Leadership Awards acknowledges this reality and celebrates those who embody it.

A broader industry call

The initiative extends beyond recognition to catalyse broader industry conversations. What skills will tomorrow's HR leaders need How can organisations better prepare emerging talent for future challenges How can the industry create more opportunities for innovation and experimentation

"To every HR professional reading this: if you've implemented something innovative, if you've challenged the status quo, if you've created positive change in your organisation or the lives of employees – consider yourself a potential rising star," urges **Saha**. *"The criteria for these awards isn't about having the perfect resume or the longest tenure. It's about having the courage to lead, regardless of your title or years of experience."*

Looking ahead

The inaugural ceremony is scheduled for August 2025, marking what organisers believe will be a new chapter in HR

recognition – one that celebrates potential over position, innovation over tradition, and impact over tenure.

“Every established leader was once a rising star. Every industry transformation began with someone willing to challenge conventional wisdom. Every great organisation was built by people who saw possibilities where others saw limitations,” reflects **Saha**. *“The HRKatha Rising Star Leadership Awards is our commitment to identifying, celebrating, and nurturing these visionaries.”*

The programme represents more than recognition – it’s a statement about the industry’s future direction and a commitment to nurturing the talent that will define it.

By 2030, half of today’s HR practices will be obsolete. The professionals who will define what replaces them aren’t sitting in corner offices-they’re in cubicles, co-working spaces, and virtual meetings, quietly revolutionising people practices one innovation at a time. The HRKatha Rising Star Leadership Awards is our attempt to find them before everyone else does.

For more information visit www.hrkatha.com/risingstarawards.

