

INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RESOURCES CHALLENGES

Abstract

The growing recognition of the importance of effective people management does not need any particular emphasis. Human resource management (HRM) has to lead the way in making businesses more like communities and less bureaucratic. Motivation as an individual skill presupposes work conditions and the way people are treated. Most jobs require a mixture of both technical and soft skills. Communication, loyalty or even punctuality are not enough. Team working, problem solving and responsibility for production integrated with technical skills, provide employees with opportunities for progression. Between the HR managers operational work and the employees' well-being, the performance demands have to find the key to cost-control and innovation. We are going to give examples from different domains.

Keywords: analysis, organisational performance, personnel, practice, strategic HRM.

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PROVOCĂRI INTERNAȚIONALE ÎN DOMENIUL RESURSELOR UMANE

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Rezumat

Recunoașterea tot mai accentuată a importanței unei gestionări eficiente a oamenilor nu necesită niciun accent deosebit. Managementul resurselor umane (HRM) are un rol principal în a organiza afacerile precum sunt comunitățile și a le face mai puțin birocratice. Motivația ca aptitudine individuală presupune condiții de lucru și modul în care sunt tratați oamenii. Majoritatea locurilor de muncă necesită o îmbinare de abilități atât tehnice, cât și relaționale. Comunicarea, loialitatea sau chiar punctualitatea nu sunt suficiente. Lucrul în echipă, rezolvarea problemelor și responsabilitatea pentru realizarea unei producții integrate cu abilități tehnice le oferă angajaților oportunități pentru a progresa. Între managementul resurselor umane operaționalizat și bunăstarea angajaților, cerințele de performanță au devenit cheia controlului costurilor și a inovării. Vom da exemple din domenii diferite.

Cuvinte cheie: analiză, performanță organizațională, personal, practică, HRM strategic.



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1. HOW IS UNDERSTOOD THE GENERAL NATURE OF HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT (HRM) IN ITS DIACHRONICAL EVOLUTION?

Human resource management (HRM) is not only a concept and a way of motivating the employees to identify themselves with the organisation they work in, but it is also a strategic approach to the acquisition, management and motivation of a qualified personnel. To manage the personnel means to establish, maintain and develop a special framework of employment. There are several stages that have to be taken into account within this management process: the entry, the employment relationship, the termination of the employment relationship.

The concept of welfare personnel developed in the second part of the 19th century and was linked to a Quaker tradition. Providing sick pay and subsidised housing for the employees was only the beginning that continued with the provision of canteens and company outings for workers. A very important step in the development of welfare personnel was the personnel administration. The emphasis has been placed on recruitment, discipline, time keeping, payment systems, training and how the personnel records were kept. After 1950s a wider range of services have been incorporated, targetting salary administration and tactical level. Nowadays challenges impose performance appraisal which means a management by objectives and manpower planning.

The 21st century entered the entrepreneurial phase that has focused on the market economy and the enterprise culture. The management of change, the development of appropriate corporate culture have become not only necessary measures to be undertaken but they proved to be part of the reality itself.

The role of the trade unions changed along the time. A shift from the collective bargaining to centralised bargaining led to the emphasis on selection instead of recruitment.

HRM remained in the 21st century the standard bearer of the spirit of consent and the teamwork value. The challenges of the single European market had to be faced by Romanian companies as much as by Romanian administration, be it central or local.

Irrespective of a possible HRM general definition - the management of employment relationships within a firm/company - we can make the difference between the generic use of the term, referring to the way people are managed and the personnel management. Within such a definition one has to pay attention to 'the process of analysing and managing an organisation's human resource needs to ensure satisfaction of its strategic objectives' [Hellriegel et al., 2009] and to 'the policies and practices involved in carrying out the "people" or human resources aspects of a management position, including recruitment, screening, training and appraising' [Dessler, 2007].

The model that is almost exhaustive has been involving beliefs and assumptions, strategic qualities, critical role of managers, key levers.

2. WHAT IS A STRATEGIC HRM?

The definitions are always difficult to be imposed when there are several arguments to compete for a final result. When referring to a Strategic HRM, one cannot deny the connection between the concept of 'strategy' and HRM terms like 'involvement', 'empowerment', 'flexibility' or 'training'. 'Innovation' and 'change' lead to non-routine activities.

Planning is very important in the process of strategic HRM. That is why the steps meant to ensure a quality culture in the domain of Strategic HRM:

- define the corporate philosophy;
- scan environmental conditions;
- evaluate the organisation weaknesses and strengths;
- develop objectives and goals.

There are different models of HRM: the traditional model or as the matching model, the alternative model, known as the resource-based model. While the matching model addresses the needs of discriminating and demanding customers, the resource-based model is concerned with what is going on within the organisational boundaries.

Sustaining competitive advantage, developing the organisation's flexibility and creativity, capitalizing on opportunities are some of the responsibilities of a strategic HRM. A mutual commitment and a high performance are always asked. Managers are to achieve a positive working environment through establishing trust and open communication. Developing own solutions to difficulties can lead to competitive advantage.

Structuring organizations, finding the available technology, the forces for change, means working for effective management of performance. Communication is really effective within a supportive organizational culture

3. CAN HR BE PLANNED?

Human resource planning is probably the most important area when referring to personnel and HRM. Nowadays focus is on the need for flexibility in planning. Organisations should adapt to situations steeped in change. The information and communication technology (ICT) became a real impact. Planning does

not mean any more internal or contractual arrangements but also cost control and outsourcing, career management and a proactive HRM. The decision-making process is to be optimized which means that the intuitive judgement deserves a special attention. In other words, HRP is an important linking factor between strategy and operation. The process of development and selection is a part of HRP. It provides input to the training and development functions of the organization. In the 21st century the effectiveness of selection methods has caused a lot of debate. The available techniques have become more varied but the 'classic trio' – the application form, references and the interview – remain the most used methods of selection even for those who make the judgement and the decisions.

4. INTERNATIONAL HRM PRINCIPLES

The values of a strategic approach facing different attitudes, moral issues, social challenges made possible a comparison between markets, regions and even continents.

Taking into account the principles of the HRM in an Asian context, one would have to consider:

- politeness and courtesy;
- valuable personal relationships;
- hard work and thrift;
- avoidance of open conflict;
- group work predominance;
- discipline and respect for authority;
- normative system of control;

The factors that might influence the HRM in Europe are:

- pluralism vs unitarism;
- collectivism and social orientation instead of individualism;
- social partnership;
- social responsibility;
- importance of community, subsidiarity;
- tolerance for diversity;
- recognition of complexity;

5. TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT AS PART OF AN OVERALL HRM APPROACH

Achieving competitive advantage requires employees to exercise new skills and to adapt very quickly to change. Training and continuing professional development have been used interchangeably. What really matters is that training and development are interactive and complementing each other. A systematic training would start with the employees' training needs, followed by using suitable trainers and closing with the evaluation of the training. The concept of planned training introduced the idea of bringing the necessary learning to improve performance on the job and the importance of setting training objectives. The assessment of training needs has to be done at three levels: the organizational one, the task one and the employees' one.

An example that deserves to be retained is the new Learning and Skills Council (LSC) [Kelly,J 2001] in the United Kingdom having a strong business representation. It will work on training and teaching adults, especially those with poor basic skills needed in industry and coming from disadvantaged areas. The ability to speak a foreign language can improve any manager's access to information regarding the international economy, markets and even politics.

There is considerable variation between countries when referring to training and continuing professional development. In France the law requires employers to spend 1,2% of the the total gross salaries on training. Vocational training is incorporated in the school curriculum and the same situation appears in Sweden. In Germany there is a dual system of practical in-company training and theoretical bent in schools where the focus is on engineering/ industry oriented. In the United Kingdom the training culture is voluntarist (voluntary participation) and there is a focus on developing the generalist manager. Apprenticeships are said to decline. Traditional universities are still influential but they compete with new universities that offer more vocational education. Japan combines direct and voluntarist tendencies while in the USA the training culture is voluntarist. China and Hong Kong seem to search for a balance between the import of 'western' techniques of management and the local culture which focuses on conformity, social status, the need to 'preserve face' and the position of the expert.

In Romania there has been a common pattern for adopting 'western' practices of management.

6. WHAT IS TALENT MANAGEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT (TMD)?

Talent Management and Development is a HRM function and it begins with the orientation of new employees. It includes different types of training. Orientation is the first step towards helping a new employee to adjust himself/herself to the new job and the employer. It is a method to acquaint new

employees with particular aspects of their new job, including pay and benefit programmes, working hours and company rules and expectations. Through training and development programs employers provide useful means of assuring that the employees are capable of performing their jobs at the required levels and even more than that. All types of organizations provide training for the new and unexperienced employees. In addition, certain organizations often provide both on the job and off the job training programmes for those employees whose jobs are undergoing change. TMD displays career planning for employees and managers to prepare them for future challenges. Career planning activities include assessing an individual employee's potential for growth and advancement in the organization. 'Performance appraisal includes encouraging risk taking, demanding innovation, generating or adopting new tasks, peer evaluation, frequent evaluations, and auditing innovation processes'

7. HOW IS ROMANIA COPING WITH INTERNATIONAL HRM CHALLENGES?

From the results of a study conducted in 150 companies based in Romania, the conclusion would be that the reality is very diverse and even complex. Researchers affirm that the human resources management in Romanian organisations still has a large number of formal human resources strategies and policies, but frequently the employees don't have any ideas about their objectives. The short time planning prevails and has a major influence over the human resources management practices. The operational activities are however more present in Romanian companies than in some other foreign ones. The managerial behaviour is to be improved adding procedures of human resources management planning and career management. The job description should be more accurate and of a higher importance. The objective management as a performance appraisal and a reward method should become a daily practice.

8. PROSPER PROJECT - AN EXAMPLE OF HRM AND MORE THAN THAT

PROSPER (Project for Special Purpose English in Romania) was set in 1991 with the aim of improving the level of English proficiency of future personnel in key sectors of the Romanian economy and public life such as engineering, economics, public administration, and medicine. Teachers as well as specialists from the domains mentioned above have been enabled to work together to accomplish tasks. It was the period when the Romanian institutions were beginning to generate new models. Participants were able to extend and enhance the following skills:

- teaching skills;
- research skills;
- critical thinking;

- project management skills;
- communication skills;
- interpersonal skills;
- teamwork skills;
- strategic competence;
- coping with challenging/unexpected situations;

Change and learning, on one hand, innovations and change, on the other hand can be planned with the identification of problems and needs, the planning of action, implementation of the plans and evaluation of results. The management of change has been taught as specific to each situation, and according to human variables as trust, confidence, a people-oriented, participatory approach.

CONCLUSIONS

No one can deny the importance of HRM whose aim is to value human 'assets'. This is equally true for the concept of teamwork. On the other hand, training and development are not a panacea for all organizational ills.

Trained staff is needed to operate internationally. There are linkages between training, professional developments, recruitment and selection. The main question is whether a company should buy in skilled people from the external labour supply or develop its own people internally. What is however already checked is that organizations have to have an ongoing training policy if employees are to keep up to date and if the organization is committed to them. Romanian organizations be them private or public still need to improve their HRM and its components.

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