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Signed:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Duncan Hook', is written over a light grey rectangular background.

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Report – CIPD HR Profession Map

As a function in an organisation, HR practice has historically been perceived as highly operational; dealing with arising issues and basic tasks such as payroll or appraisal without larger business context (Johns & Perkins, 2016, p. 76). The CIPD has aimed to define HR as a profession, taking the best examples of expertise and behaviours of HR practitioners and developing tools such as the HR Profession Map (Woodhams, et al., 2016, p. 110) which outline standards that all should hold themselves to. The aim being to develop the HR professional into a “thinking performer” (Johns & Perkins, 2016, p. 71); an individual who sees the big picture and can make valuable, relevant contributions which “add value” (Johns & Perkins, 2016, p. 69) to the performance of an organisation. Here I aim to break down the features of the HRPM and how it both defines the HR profession and is an essential tool in developing effective HR professionals.

Johns and Perkins (2016, p. 76) simply define a professional as someone who holds themselves and their work to a high standard. Highly regarded jobs such as in the medical profession follow a strict and ethical code. The CIPD have outlined their own ethical and representative rules in the CIPD Code of Professional Conduct (CIPD, 2020) which outline what the standards should be but not how we develop further.

Looking at development in particular, Johns and Perkins (2016, p. 76) describe HR professionalism as a process of “managing”; actively managing the skills and behaviours of yourself, peers, leaders and the whole organisation to uphold the standard of good HR practice.

The CIPD’s HR Profession Map (HRPM), introduced in 2013, is an interactive tool that breaks down these skills and behaviours, creating a competency framework (Woodhams, et al., 2016, p. 110) enabling HR professionals to identify opportunities, learning and developing themselves. To be perceived as professional is something that HR practitioners have been striving for (Balthazard, 2014), with the respect and credibility that come with it; the HRPM gives a framework to achieve and manage this.

Looking broadly at the HRPM, the focus is on two individual lists of Behaviours and Professional Areas. All of these are then approached from four bands of development, which expand in complexity as individual progresses in their career (CIPD, 2013).

In terms of professional areas in the HRPM there are ten overall but two are considered “Core” for all and sit at the centre of the map:

- *Insights, strategy and solutions*
- *Leading HR*

Both of these areas speak to the increased professionalism that Johns and Perkins (2013) were referring to as, in summary, leading and strategizing see the HR function having an informed, proactive approach to their work. The further eight professional areas could really be considered “Specialisms” and so are more specific to the direction of an individual’s career:

- *Employee Engagement*
- *Employee Relations*
- *Learning and Development*
- *Service delivery & Information*

- *Organisation Design*
- *Resourcing & Talent Planning*
- *Performance & Reward*
- *Organisational Development*

There are then eight behaviours which are considered essential competencies for all HR professionals, whichever areas they specialise in (CIPD, 2013):

- 'Role Model' sets the example for others to follow. Including knowledge of legal and ethical boundaries, knowing where to access this information as well as encouraging others to seek it themselves (CIPD, 2013). They prioritise doing the right thing over any immediate benefit to themselves (Balthazard, 2014).
- 'Curious' individual is open to exploring different opportunities and ideas for the betterment of an organisation by keeping abreast of developments in the wider HR profession, seeking strategies that have worked elsewhere and understanding how to apply these in house (CIPD, 2013).
- 'Decisive thinker' will be able to efficiently assess a situation, digesting data, to arrive at a solid solution. Decision quality will come from both experience and knowledge but also requires instinct for what ethical solutions look like. This isn't about rushing through information rather knowing what information is needed to make a decision (CIPD, 2013).
- 'Skilled influencer' is able to gather support from all areas of the organisation to achieve their goals. This requires them to be able to engage with a variety of stakeholders and able to adapt when communicating to win them over (CIPD, 2013).
- 'Personally credible' builds on what makes the individual a dependable role model and apply their knowledge for results which benefit the organisation. This skill is developed by striving to build experience and knowledge by getting involved with variety of projects that challenge and expand (CIPD, 2013).
- 'Collaborative' behaviour is the individual's ability to work and share with others for the betterment of a project. This is a test of interpersonal and communication skills and may require some leadership capability in some scenarios (CIPD, 2013).
- 'Driven to deliver' will be organised, understand what is required and able to achieve sometimes multiple projects on time. This behaviour explores the ability to motivate not only others but also oneself (CIPD, 2013).
- 'Courage to challenge' encourages the individual to assertive in making their own decisions and question others to get to the right solution. This isn't just about challenging others but also challenging the status quo, standing alone if required (CIPD, 2013).

Armstrong (Armstrong & Taylor, 2020, p. 161) refers to behaviours such as these being measured against a standard which is why the bands are important for anyone to see which level they should be at and not be overwhelmed or alienated. These are listed as Bands 1-4 in the HRPM which the individual can determine using criteria such as the type of work they perform, working relationship with their clients and ways in which successes are measured in their role (CIPD, 2013, p. 6). The CIPD introduced a New Profession Map (CIPD, 2018) in which they define these bands differently into four CIPD "levels" from Foundation to Chartered level. This approach makes it somewhat easier for an individual to evaluate which band they sit at as they can measure against an actual qualification.

In addition to working against the correct band I would recommend to identify which areas should be a focus for the individual to work on. The CIPD provides a tool, 'My CPD Map' (CIPD, 2016) which

helps assess the individual against the HRPM to highlight where the opportunities lie and determine a starting point for development. Looking back Johns and Perkins (2016, p. 76) definition of an individual “managing” their development, the HRPM offers a broad outline covering every facet of the role but also giving clear guidelines for what level the individual should be aiming for at each stage of their career.

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Report - Team dynamics and political behaviour

Understanding the structure of teams is invaluable for HR professionals in both their own working practice and in support they can offer to managers forming compatible teams in the wider organisation (Lamb, et al., 2014). Teams can constantly evolve, bringing a range of expertise, characters and competencies into the mix (Amy Edmondson - How to turn a group of strangers into a team, 2018) which can bring conflict and the emergence of political behaviour (Armstrong, 2009, p. 339). Understanding roles that different individuals play (Watson, 2014, p. 217) and identifying competencies required in a team (West, 2020) will help establish teams that support and challenge each other while working towards a common goal (Watson, 2014, p. 212).

Watson (2014) references two theories that describe the makeup of teams and the common chain of development that a team might undergo in its lifetime.

Firstly, Belbin's theory defines nine identifiable roles which can help a leader form a team (Watson, 2014, p. 217). He stresses that not all nine are essential in a team, in fact recommending four to six as the optimal size of a team before resulting in compromise or conflict (An Interview with Meredith Belbin, 2008). Different combinations of these roles can be dependent on the team's goal and for this reason the nine roles are divided into the following:

- "Task-related team roles" which are the "Shaper", "Implementer" and "Completer finisher" and focus on questioning or challenging processes, the ability to identify tangible tasks and the timely execution of tasks respectively (Watson, 2014, p. 217).
- "Social-related team roles" which are the "Resource investigator", "Co-ordinator" and "Teamworker" and are characterised by bringing enthusiasm and initial energy to a team, organisation and delegation or submissive, co-operative behaviour respectively (Watson, 2014, p. 217).
- "Thinking-related team roles" which are the "Plant", "Monitor evaluator" and "Specialist" and focus on problem solving, analysing potential solutions or focus on their area of expertise respectively (Watson, 2014, p. 217).

Secondly, Watson (2014) references Tuckman's theory of a five-stage development process for teams. The first, "Forming" sees an element of uncertainty as team members figure each other out socially and professionally; uncovering strengths, weaknesses and individual motivations. The next stage "Storming" sees conflict most likely as the team naturally develop roles and begin to work together on solutions. This stage is where emotions can come to the fore as potential hierarchy is established and ideas presented and quashed (Tuckman, 1963). The "Norming" stage sees the group dynamic fall into place, the team collaborate, and the team find the best way to work together so that by the next stage, "Performing", everyone has their role and is focussed on the team's overall goal to finish at the "Adjourning" stage (Watson, 2014, p. 215).

While it could seem like the "Storming" stage is unnecessary conflict in an otherwise smooth process, this is an essential step in finding truly innovative solutions. Previous thought was that only "cohesive" teams led to "stability and higher productivity" (Watson, 2014, p. 213). This is exhibited by Google's (2020) findings when looking at their best examples of effective teams. They found that it "mattered less about who is on the team, and more about how the team worked together (Google, 2020) – citing respectful behaviour promoting free speech as both an effective conduit for innovation but also in line with the company culture. There are, however, benefits to encouraging an element of conflict. Gifford (Lamb, et al., 2014) recommends a diverse mix of characters as people who all get on won't challenge each other and innovate: "you need... enough of a mixture of strengths and perspectives in the team that you can be pushing the boundaries." This is where

Belbin's theory of diverse roles links to Tuckman's as the diversity of roles leads to diversity of opinion and fresh ideas. In my own previous experience at Apple, working in an HR team of six from a range of backgrounds including acting, merchandising and management there were disagreements about direction to take but through a range of ideas we reached unique solutions for employee engagement.

Whether leading to conflict or not, thrusting a diverse group together often results in organisational politics becoming apparent. Politics are a factor in any organisation and a manager or HR practitioner needs to develop "Political Sensitivity" (Armstrong, 2009, p. 340); understanding the history, hierarchy and culture of the business before decision-making or judgement while also avoiding getting involved themselves (Horn, 2009). Armstrong (2009, p. 339) believes that "political behaviour is inevitable in organisations because they consist of individuals" who are inherently looking to develop themselves while getting the job done and that it's the job of a good manager to harness the individual drives of team members with polarising ideas to work together to achieve this common goal (Armstrong, 2009, p. 339). Rodgers (2006) stresses that while we may wish to help focus political thought in a team we "cannot control these conversations or the formation of coalitions in any meaningful sense" as the relationships and collaborations are a characteristic of bringing quality people in and allowing free thought.

The negative impact to political behaviour is first on a social level with fighting or gossip which are never helpful (Armstrong, 2009, p. 340) but there are also business-level impacts that are potentially more disruptive. Armstrong (2009, p. 340) refers to "excessive and counterproductive lobbying" resulting in additional bureaucracy stalling productivity in teams. However, the opposite can be the case when a political thinker is involved with difficult decision-making as they are prepared to make a decision for their own benefit, which also keeps things moving (Armstrong, 2009, p. 339) the best examples of which are found in politics. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic the UK government have been pushed to make decisions that either "follow the science" (Runciman, 2020) and save lives or reopen businesses and save jobs; when actually the decision made will be one that they believe makes them favourable to the voter base.

In many of these sources, it is advised that strong Leadership is required for direction and managing teams political situations but HR also has a part to play in ensuring this happens. The CIPD (2020) refers to "social cohesion" being an essential part of building teams but challenging in a year that many teams are working virtually. It is still important to bring diverse teams together to achieve great results but perhaps more than ever, it is important to listen and understand the political situation to ensure it does not get in the way of the teams goals.

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