# The Contemporary HR Function

## What is the function of HR?

To surport the business through the managemnt of people. This can include:

- Recruitment
- Proformance management
- Absence Management
- Developing People
- Grivenves
- Engageing people

The HR function is to be able to effectively manage people and the proformance, to create a support base to provide help and guidance in achieving the company's strategies and targets. Traditionally, an HR function was limited to mainly admin tasks, such as booking in holidays, recording sickness, payroll etc. Contrasting to today where HR personnel are considered key aspects within the organisation and is usually at the center of a organisations proformance.

The CIPD's new profession map (2018) puts better work and better work lives at the center of its importance. Acknowledging the importance of a HR professionals' task in managing proformance and in so creating a work environment that encourages the best out of the workforce.

The HR function helps an organisation deliver its corporate strategy and objectives by effectively recruiting and developing people and managing their performance. HR objectives are delivered differently in different types of organisations.

(CIPD, 2021)

Other HR functions can include recruitment, in which an HR professional would look for key skills an attitude in recruits to help the organisations objectives, whilst also developing both new and existing staff and managing proformance of all employees. The CIPD conducted a survey in which they asked a sample of HR professionals what they felt were the most important tasks that they were involved in that contributed to the organisations objectives. In 2007 they listed the following as the top objectives:

- To recruit and retain staff.
- To develop employee competencies
- To improve the management of people proformance
- To maximise employee involvement engagement

These objectives are commonly at the top of an HR professional's priority list, with very similar results occurring when similar questions get asked. This is further support to the idea that an HR function is to attract and retain staff with a suitable set of skills for the organisation and then making a conscious effort to establish them to maximise their proformance whilst involving and engaging them in their work life. (Taylor S. and WoodhamC., 2016, pg 22).

# How has HR evolved?

**Human Resources was birthed in the late nineteenth centry and was reffered to as personnel management, it them moved onto human resource management at the end of the twentieth centry. Now this has moved onto Strategic human resource management. It should be aspected that human resources will continue to develop and evolve in the coming years.**

The start of the HR profession came in the late nineteenth centry, when operations became large enough, they would set up personnel departments and a HR professional would have been considered personnel management and conducting tasks such as, dealing with trade unions, wage packets and employee record keeping listing a few examples. This then emerged from personnel management into human resources management. Towards the end of the twentieth centry there was a shift in what organisations considered important, moving away from the idea of staff being cogs in the corporate scheme and more as resources that can be encouraged, developed and be key resources within the company. This started the focus of looking into the behaviors of employees and how to challenge an employee within the work environment and creating a range of benefits.

Today, HR has evolved to strategic human resource management. Dissolving the idea that the workforce are cogs or resources and recongnising them as assets to the organisation and the objectives set.

This marked the elevation of the HR function to a strategic player in the organisation, responsible for aligning individual and team goals with organisation objectives, facilitating a participative culture, and even directly shaping organisation strategies.

(Taylor S. and Woodham C., 2016, pg 24)

## How HR Contributes to effective change management

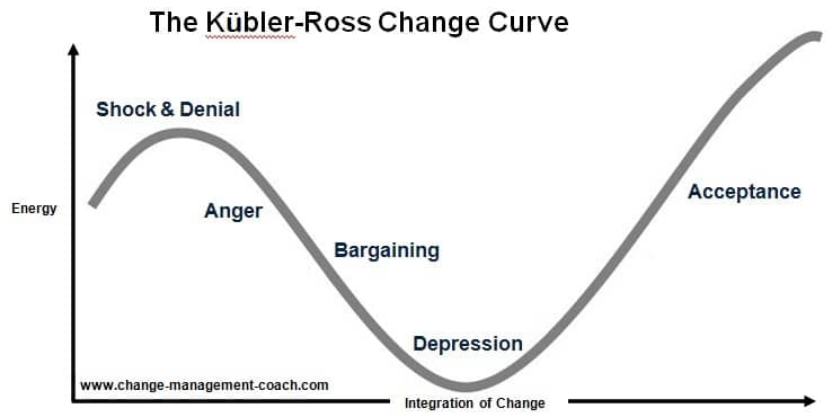
**Contributing to the Controllable:**

- **Involvement**
- **Advertising the change**
- **Looking at the long and short term goals**
- **Balancing intrests**
- **Taking into account stakeholder concern**
- **Evaluating and reporting the impact**

An organisation can be constantly changing, weather this is because of growth or downsizing in a company, economic factors that force the organisation to change or adapt, customer or supplier influences or change in objectives set by the company. Weather the organisation is large or small it will have to endure changes. Every company has experienced this lately with the current pandemic and the way work life and home life has had to change to keep people safe. Employees are usually at the center of change in the workplace. The CIPD's research suggests that up to seventy percent change initiatives can often fail (CIPD, 2020). The failure of managing change correctly and effectively can lead to dramatic impacts on the organisation. Potentially causing a lack of employee engagement and enthusiasm towards work, a loss of credibility towards the stakeholders, a loss of the current position of market and removal of senior management.

## Contribution to the uncontrollable:

- Helping people adabt to the change
- Surprorting staff that are going through the change
- Communicating
- Sharing information from the top down and elimanating any gossip
- Looking at different models to help guide the HR professional in helping staff with the change




The Kuber-Ross Change curve diagrame (CIPD, 2020)

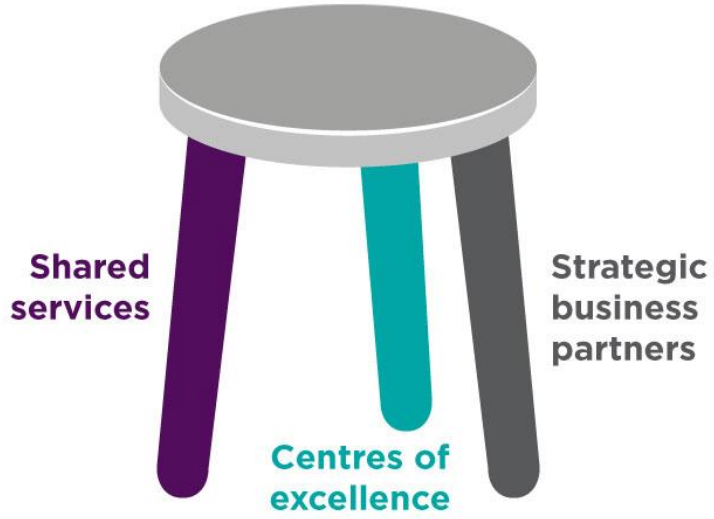
The Kuber-Ross '5 Stage Model' was initially focusing on the stages one may go through when experiencing grief, being featured in her book 'On Death and Dying' in 1969. It was noticed that this model could also be related to changes in the workplace and could help HR professionals to support the workforce when experiencing change. The model shows five stages that an individual may experience during change: denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance. It is important to note that an individual may not go through all the stages and may not go through the stages in the same order, but HR professionals are able to adapt depending on the stage of the individual. Some critics say that this model is too simple to successfully define an individual's thought process to change and that an individual will experience a wide range of emotions when going through change (Mark Connely, 2020).

## Ways in which HR objectives can be delivered.

- Traditional HR structures
- Ulrich's 'three-legged stool' model
- Outsaucing HR services
- The delivery by line managers

HR objectives differ largely from organisation to organisation. Not all HR professionals will be focusing on the same topic, and when focusing on a certain topic the HR professionals will make it specific to the organisation and major stakeholders' needs. In turn this uniqueness will mean that the delivery of HR objectives will also be unique to the HR professional and organisation. Research into the field has found that a lot of HR professionals feel that a HR structure should be reflective of what the customer wants, and the organisation needs (CIPD, 2006, pg 3).

The structure that is used most commonly is the traditional HR structure. This tends to be a HR department that is usually made up of a group of generalists that take on the role but need to have a verity of skills to deal with both operational and strategic work (Miller, 2015 pg 4). This model pf delivery of HR seems to be popular in smaller business but also is popular in the private, CIPD's research showed 48% of respondents report to a HR department and choose this structure (Steven Taylor and Carol Woodhams, 2016, pg 4).




Ulrich's 'three-legged stool' model (CIPD, 2020)

Ulrich's model that was created in the late 1990's and was set out to define the structure of delivery of HR. The model referred to as the 'three-legged stool' or 'three boxes' has been describing as the best practice approach but there are still debates on how the model should be interpreted. The model is made up of three different sections, shared services, centers of expertise and HR business partnering or strategic partners.

HR business partnering or strategic partners is where business partners/line managers and HR professionals work closely together to deliver shared organisation processes. This model does tend to be used in larger organisations and the extent to which it is used can vary, although it has been difficult to measure how much this tool has been used in the HR environment due to the different impetrations of Ulrich's model (CIPD, 2015, pg 5). By using this model, it does mean that HR professionals can take more of a strategic approach to HR functions and gives the HR professional the unique information related directly to the organisation and needs of the main stakeholders.

The centers of expertise part of the model are relating to the idea of a team of HR professionals that have specialist knowledge in certain areas of HR. This is usually used by corporate, national or regional organisations and often the HR department will usually run like a business itself. The idea is that the HR team will have expert

knowledge that will be able to drive the organisation and be able to deliver HR innovations (CIPD, 2015, pg 6). Although studies have shown disappointments for this way of delivering HR and has been observed as a missed commercial opportunity (Boroughs, 2015, pg 7).

The final leg of the model is the 'shared services', which large relates to more of the administrative tasks of the HR function. The CIPD described this as usually large units that take control of the transactional and routine services that an organisation has to offer. Usually, these services take place in the workplace but can also be outsourced. There can be some negativity around this, line managers may feel unhappy about responsibility being passed back to them. Also, there have been issues found in companies that have taken this approach with some employees not having access to office equipment or not having the knowledge to use the equipment.

## HR and line managers

**Line managers' human resource duties can include:**

- Absence management
- Appraisal
- Grievance
- Staff well fair
- Team development
- Recruitment
- Health and safety
- Staff deployment

Over the past decades line managers have been taking a stronger role in people management. They are often considered the link between the HR professionals and the employee's and they can influence employees' behaviors and attitudes towards work and the working environment. Line managers are increasingly being expected to have more and more knowledge of the HR function. Line managers' duties can include:

- Absence management
- Appraisal
- Grievance
- Staff well fair
- Team development
- Recruitment
- Health and safety
- Staff deployment

There has been a huge increase in the amount of line managers reporting that certain aspects of the HR function are delivered and managed only by the line managers themself. Research has shown that the role of a line manager can directly influence an employee but having a link between the employee and the line manager has created an increase in operation efficiency and can be a competitive advantage for the workforce. The line manager acts as an interface between the employee and the business, the more positive the line manager and employee relationship the more likely that the employee will experience job satisfaction, commitment to the organisation and loyalty. With line managers having such an influence on employee's proformance and attitude to the work force it is important that they are trained correctly and picked carefully (CIPD, 2015).
It is the HR professional's responsibility to make sure that the line managers are deliver these aspects correctly whilst supporting the line manager. The parts of people management that a line manager takes on should be considered carefully and it is important to look at the line managers job role and make sure sufficient training has been provided for the line manager for them to confidently carry out their people management tasks. It is important for the HR professional to be able to support the line manager when needed (CIPD, 2015).

# Managing human resources in an ethical and just manner

Fairness

the rules and practices that define respectful and responsible conduct between individuals and group

deciding what is right and what is wrong

It is extremely important that an HR professional always acts within an ethical manor. It is said that there are three core aspects to being ethical. These are fairness, deciding what is right and what is wrong, and finally, and the rules and practices that define respectful and responsible conduct between individuals and groups (Kew and Stredwick, 2010, pg 36).

There is a business case for ethical HR management which states that ethical behaviors are needed to sustain and develop professional working relationships. The workforce needs to be able to trust that the HR manager is acting fairly in all cases. Having Ethical standards within the company is becoming increasingly important with people focusing more on the ethical reputation of the company. HR professionals should consider themselves a role model for conducting work with ethics.

Ethical behaviors can include,

- Obeying the company's rules and regulations
- Communicating effectively
- Developing professional relationships
- Taking responsibility
- Uphold trust.
- Being professional and upholding standards
- Respecting your collogues

Non-ethical Behaviours:

- Lying
- Taking credit for others work
- Violence
- Corrupt practices
- Verbal abuse
- Harassment

Compared to non-ethical behaviors which include,

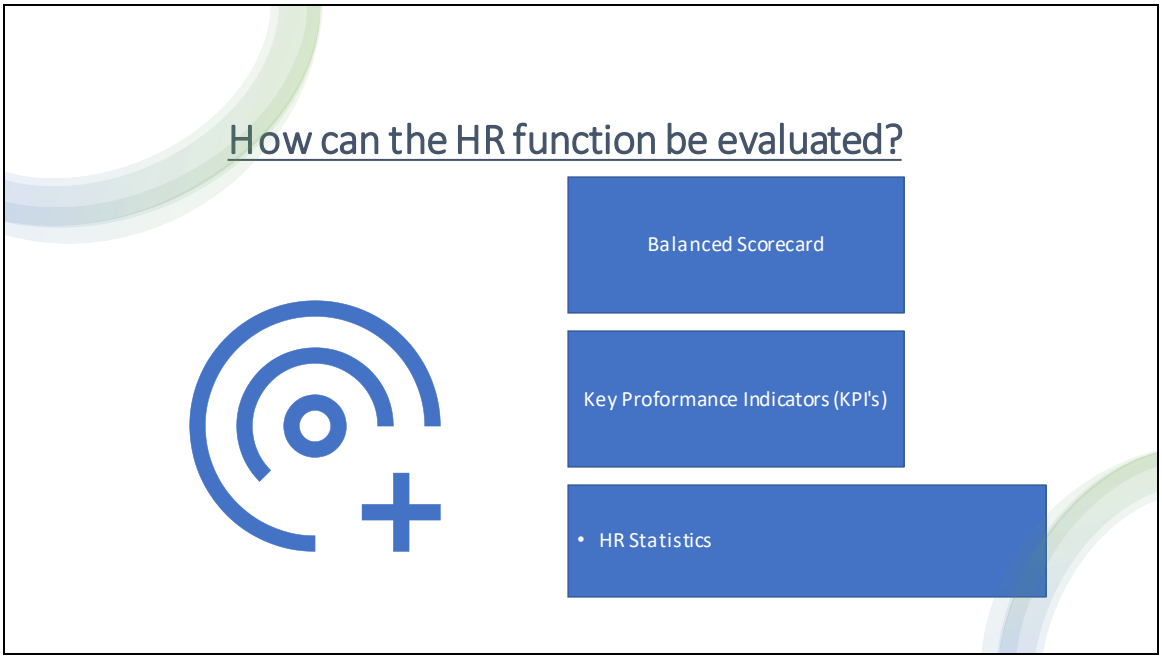
- Lying
- Taking credit for others work
- Violence
- Corrupt practices
- Verbal abuse
- Harassment

## Why Evaluate the HR function

- Evaluation of the HR function is the only way for one to analyse the effect that it is having on the HR function.
- It can also help highlight where improvements can be made in the future
- Is the only way to show that an HR professional is adding value to the organisation

Only through evaluation of the different impacts of the HR function can you see its effectiveness and the impact that it is having on the organisation. It is only by evaluation that an HR professional can show that they add to the business. There are different methods in which you can evaluate HR. Some of the more common ways to evaluate HR include HR statistics, KPI's (key points of interest) and a balanced scorecard.

HR statistics look at evaluating topics such as, retention, absence figures, recruitment spend, disciplinary and grievance statistics, training/development hours and spend. This can then be compared to previous years to give a rough benchmark of how the HR function was performing compared to how it is preforming currently. Although these statistics will have to be looked at individually to give fair and accurate conclusions. It can also be used to compare the organisation with that of a similar sized business to see how the HR function is working in your organisation compared to others.




Looking at how the HR function is corresponding with the KPI's of the business is directly looking into the improvements that HR may have implemented that will help the organisation achieve its objectives. Usually, a key point of interest will have a deadline, achievable and be proformance relevant.
Finally, looking at a balanced scorecard, there will be an agreed list of proformance measures presented in a document containing different tables. There should be a strategy map showing the relations between these measures and the organisations strategic objectives.
It is also important that an HR professional takes time to evaluate their own profomance. Seeing if the process the ability to inherit the 'three savvies' that gives them the requirements to become insight driven. This includes being contextual savvy, organisational savvy and business savvy, this self-evaluation should be given by the key organisational stakeholders (Stephen Taylor and Carol Woodhams, 2016, pg 31).

## Examples of evaluating HR.

**A report was published looking into the effects of human resource management on a health care organisation. Specifically looking at how the HR function has affected employees, organisational and financial outcomes. The organisation compared itself with the benchmark of another organisation of a similar size and nature of work. It also looked at statistics from the previous year compared to the current year. The finding showed the direct relation between these topics and the role of the HR function. For example, the financial outcome to the organisation had improved and through evaluation of the HR function it revealed that this was related to the development of the employees, creating better customer satisfaction (Vermeeren, 2014).**

McDonalds, one of the largest family restaurant chains in the world, also evaluated its human resources function in terms of recruitment. The aim was to see if they were getting the right recruitment for the job. They discovered that the HR function was working well but decided that technology could also be implemented in the process to make it more accurate. they did this by implementing an online test that a candidate must complete before moving onto the next stage, this seemed to help the recruitment process as the turnover of staff has become lower since this test was introduced (Ukessay, 2017).