

LOCATION: HOME

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LEVEL 7

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EXAMINATION PERIOD

CYFNOD ARHOLIADAU

MAY 2020

MAI 2020

MODULE TITLE: Human Resource Management in Context

MODULE CODE: BMHR7004

TIME: 48 HOURS

INSTRUCTIONS TO CANDIDATES:

A copy of the article (section 1) will have been provided three weeks prior to your exam.

Answer all questions in section 1.

Answer either question A or B for each question in section 2.

You should answer a total of 6 questions, 3 in section 1 and 3 in section 2. You must answer all 6 questions in order to achieve a pass.

The questions in section 1 carry a weight of 40 marks, all questions in section 2 carry an equal weighting of 20 marks, so you should plan your word count to reflect this.

Maximum word count: 2500 words.

This is an open book exam and you may refer to any sources whilst completing your answers.

Your answers (clearly labelled and in one document) should be uploaded to Turnitin by 12pm on Thursday 14th May 2020.

Academic honesty is required. In the main body of your submission you must give credit to authors on whose research and ideas your work is based. Append to your submission a reference list that indicates the books, articles, etc. that you have used, cited or quoted in order to complete this assessment. You should complete this task on your own and without collaboration with others.

SECTION 1:

Two in five businesses have no contingency plan to manage coronavirus outbreak

13 Mar 2020 By Siobhan Palmer, People Management [On-line].

As the UK moves to delaying rather than containing the virus, a *People Management* and CIPD survey reveals how HR professionals are responding to the situation.

Almost two in five organisations have no business contingency plan in place to deal with the coronavirus outbreak, a survey of HR professionals has found.

As the UK moves into the 'delay' phase of managing the virus, also known as Covid-19, *People Management* and the CIPD have polled more than 640 HR professionals to find out what they are doing in their organisations to deal with the threats posed to the health of employees and their businesses.

HR professionals answered questions on continuity planning, sick pay and self-isolation, and *People Management* has been releasing the results throughout the week.

The poll found nearly two-fifths (39 per cent) of HR professionals surveyed did not yet have a business contingency plan in place to deal with the coronavirus.

Half of respondents said they had a comprehensive or reasonably comprehensive level of pandemic preparedness in their organisations before the outbreak, while over a fifth (21 per cent) reported their level of preparedness was non-existent, and 29 per cent said their level of preparedness was not very comprehensive.

Professor Nada Kakabadse, professor of policy, governance and ethics and Henley Business School, said the results were "more favourable than expected", but voiced scepticism around how extensive and feasible such plans were likely to be in reality.

She suggested many contingency plans were often "little more than confidence boosters for employees" and were unlikely to have been tested before now.

For some businesses, a lack of contingency planning may reflect the nature of the organisation, whereby it would have no choice but to proceed as normal to stay afloat, she added.

"Any organisation producing goods, from a bakery to a much larger manufacturer, has no option but to keep going, otherwise production stops," she said, highlighting many sectors did not have the ability to let staff work from home without ceasing business altogether.

"What can most businesses do other than use common sense and take basic precautions which have been repeatedly displayed in the media?" she added.

Richard Wilding, professor of supply chain strategy at Cranfield School of Management, highlighted smaller businesses were, by their nature, more likely to struggle with large-scale, strategic planning. "It's just a matter of having the bandwidth to think through it, and sometimes people don't really understand what's actually involved," he said.

Such planning was nonetheless highly beneficial for those with the capacity, Wilding said. But, in the face of such a large-scale pandemic, any plans would have to extend to a company's entire supply chain: "If you've got great continuity plans for your own business, unfortunately you're going to have to extend that into your suppliers, and also your customers' businesses for it to be really effective at this time," he said.

"If you've a chain of companies or a network of companies who all have thought about this and have got good collaboration in place ... you're going to be far more resilient".

The *People Management* and CIPD survey also found over half (54 per cent) of respondents said HR was very involved in their organisations' strategy and planning around coronavirus. But a small minority (4 per cent) reported they were not involved at all. Less than a third (30 per cent) said HR was quite involved, with 12 per cent reporting they were not very involved.

The survey also asked respondents what they expected the financial impact of coronavirus to be on their business. The majority (95 per cent) said there would be an impact. Nearly half (48 per cent) said the impact would be moderate, 15 per cent said severe and 30 per cent mild.

Angela O'Connor, CEO of The HR Lounge and former public sector HR director, warned it was important for HR professionals not to be "distracted by trying to become medical experts", and instead to focus on communicating with staff in "simple, human terms".

While accepting that comprehensive, detailed policies were not possible in such a changing environment, she said people professionals should aim to use a variety of media and advise people quickly on current best practice, adding: "Being able to communicate that we don't have the answers is also important."

HR also must be flexible about how it approached working at home, how it used technology to support the business, and needed to allow people to change hours and ways of working, she said.

"Now is the time to trust our teams and staff to get work done without supervision and to help them through the next difficult few months. Managers will not have faced anything like this and HR can really help by coaching them to be more adaptive, agile and open minded."

The government announced yesterday the decision to move towards 'delaying' rather than 'containing' the virus, and advised anyone with a persistent cough or high

temperature to self-isolate for seven days. However, the prime minister advised he would not be closing schools at this time.

In Scotland, gatherings of more than 500 people have been banned. In the Republic of Ireland, schools, colleges and other public facilities are being closed, and taoiseach (prime minister) Leo Varadkar has said mass gatherings of more than 100 people and outdoor gatherings of more than 500 should be cancelled.

So far 10 people in the UK have died from the virus, with the number of confirmed cases at 596.

1.1 The current Coronavirus pandemic has highlighted the need for businesses to plan for the opportunities and threats posed by external influences. Using an organisation you are familiar with, critically examine which tools HR and management could use to analyse its external environment, justifying your choice **(10 marks)**.

1.2 Building on some of the points highlighted in the above People Management article, discuss the strategic priorities for businesses and HR departments in constantly changing environments **(20 marks)**.

1.3 Using your own organisation, or one you are familiar with, discuss how HR departments can best organise themselves to support the business to be more resilient during such unpredictable times **(10 marks)**.

SECTION 2

Answer either A or B in each section.

All answers should be justified as far as possible using appropriate theory and evidence.

To communicate your answers more clearly you may use whatever methods you wish, for example diagrams, flowcharts, bullet points; you need to provide an explanation of each.

2.1

a. Critically examine the need for businesses to fully embrace technology and artificial intelligence, for the long-term sustainability of their businesses.

OR

b. Critically examine the need for employers to fully embrace social trends such as the emphasis on well-being and mental health, for the long-term sustainability of their businesses.

2.2

a. Discuss how the competitive environment shapes HR's agenda, using examples from an organisation you are familiar with and recommend ways the organisation could improve its position as an employer in a tight labour market.

OR

b. Critically examine the extent to which the HR agenda is influenced by the economic position of an organisation, particularly in periods of rapid growth or decline.

2.3

- a. "We're in the midst of a climate emergency, yet research from London Business School and recruitment consultancy Harvey Nash has shown that the boards of UK businesses are the least likely to feel responsible for their impact on the environment. "(Palmer, 2020).

Using organisational examples, critically analyse the need for businesses and other organisations to focus on the issue of environmental sustainability.

OR

- b. Critically examine how recent legislation has impacted on an organisation of your choice. Suggest how your organisation could have improved its response with reference to best practice or research.

Section 2 Reference List:

Palmer, S (2020). UK Businesses Ignore Climate Change. *People Management* [Online]. Available at: <https://www.peoplemanagement.co.uk/experts/research/uk-businesses-ignore-climate-change> (Accessed: 19th March 2020).