

Qualification: CIPD Diploma in Applied Human Resources

Module Name: Understanding the Contemporary Human Resources (HR) Function

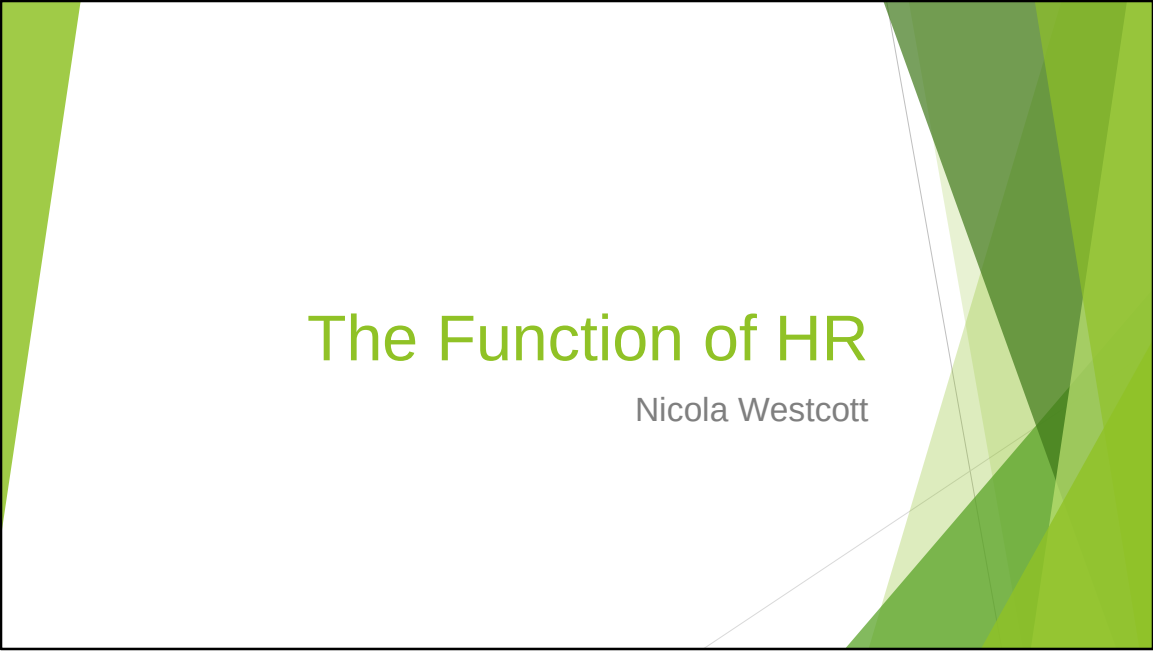
The Function of HR

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Date: 14/02/2020

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The Function of HR

Nicola Westcott

Aims:

- ▶ Understanding the purpose and key objectives of the HR function in contemporary organisations.
- ▶ Understanding different models of delivering HR services.
- ▶ Understanding the role of ethics in HR management and development.
- ▶ Understanding how HR's contribution to the organisation can be evaluated.

The Purpose of HR

The purpose of the HR Function is to support the delivery of the organisation's strategy and objectives through the effective management of people and performance.

As such an organisation's HR strategy and all activities should be clearly aligned with the strategy and objectives of the business (Wilkinson and Taylor, 2016).

HR sits at the heart of business performance. Supporting the organisation's performance is a key theme running through all the work undertaken by HR, rather than just delivering the fundamentals in an employee's lifecycle. The image/name of HR has evolved over time and has moved away from transactional to transformational.

Personnel Management



Source: Personnel Management Services

- ▶ Employee record keeping
- ▶ Recruitment
- ▶ Training
- ▶ Wages
- ▶ Welfare initiatives
- ▶ Dealing with trade unions
- ▶ Basic performance appraisals

Dates to the Industrial Revolution. Professionals dealing with employment policy/practice were called personnel managers or personnel administrator managers. PM – routine tasks, employees employed for a long periods, internal promotions. During the 1920's trade unions became stronger, government brought in Health and Safety legislation. Numbers of skilled workers increased particularly in manufacturing companies during nineteenth/twentieth centuries, a personnel management profession was established in larger organisations. Tended to focus on short term objectives.

Human Resource Management (HRM)

► HRM is the term used to cover activities relating to the management of the organisation and the people who work for it. (Taylor & Woodhams, 2016).



Source: Digital HR Tech

Marchington *et al* (2012) defines HRM as the management of employment. Term was first used in America in the 1960's, becoming popular in the 1990's. New way to manage people, focused on achieving organisational objectives. As standardised industries declined, managers were able to design their own approaches to meet the needs of their organisation. Businesses became more competitive, flexible working more common as well as performance management systems. Alongside day to day activities e.g. recruitment, contracts, inductions, payments, training, attention is given to legal, technical and financial aspects to support the organisations strategic objectives. Employees seen as resources, efforts made to help promote employee well-being, training and development opportunities, thus helping build the reputation of the company by engaging the workforce. Activities tend to look at long term objectives (CIPD 2019g).

Strategic Human Resources Management (SHRM)

► SHRM is an approach to managing human resources that supports long-term business goals and outcomes with a strategic framework (CIPD 2019f).



Source: Strategic Human Resource Management

Increasing growth in technology and knowledge-based organisations – employees viewed as assets rather than resources. Aligning HR procedures to organisational objectives, automation of routine tasks, enabled HR to evolve from transactional to transformational.

HR Objectives

► The core purpose and activities of the HR function evolve in response to developments in the business environment but do not change radically from one decade to another (Taylor & Woodhams, 2016).

► The following are identified as major objectives:

- Recruit & retain key staff
- Develop employee competencies
- Improve management of people performance
- Maximise employee involvement & engagement

HRM is about attracting/retaining people with the required skills/experience, developing/maximising their performance, involve/engage them in the work of the organization (CIPD 2007). These objectives tend to move up and down the HR agenda. Recently employee well-being has moved up the agenda to comply with legislative requirements, improve the organisations reputation. Also a move towards greater ethicality in organisations. A CIPD research report has summed this up as a move from '*best practice thinking*' to '*good practice thinking*' (CIPD 2015b).

CIPD HRM Profession Map



Source: CIPD

- Sets out standards for HR professionals around the world.
- Continual research/collaboration ensure the map is updated with requirements at each career stage of the most successful HR professionals.
- Used as a tool by HR Professionals and organisations to build capability/credibility.

The CIPD is the professional body that most HR professionals are a member of. As HR evolves the CIPD developed a profession map. Launched in 2013 – sets out standards for HR professionals. The following design principles were used:

Ten professional areas and eight behaviours identified, split over four bands of professional competence, describing what activities you need to do, knowledge required for each area across the four bands of competence as well as the behaviours a HR professional needs to carry out their activities. Each behaviour is shown across the four bands of professional competence. Relevant to HR professionals at all levels and describes how to transition from one band to another throughout an individual's career.

Benefits for individuals:

- CPD organisation/planning
- appraisal preparation
- preparation for CIPD membership
- career progression
- identifying development needs
- increase knowledge of the profession

- interview preparation.

Benefits for organisations:

- identify skills required to make change happen
- developing career pathways for teams/individuals
- identify team's capabilities and areas for development
- focusing on behaviours needed for success
- build a competency framework
- role profiles
- development programmes.



In 2018, the CIPD updated its profession map to reflect how:

- the role of the HR professional will change in the future
- recognises how HR adds value to an organisation.

HR Contribution to Change Management

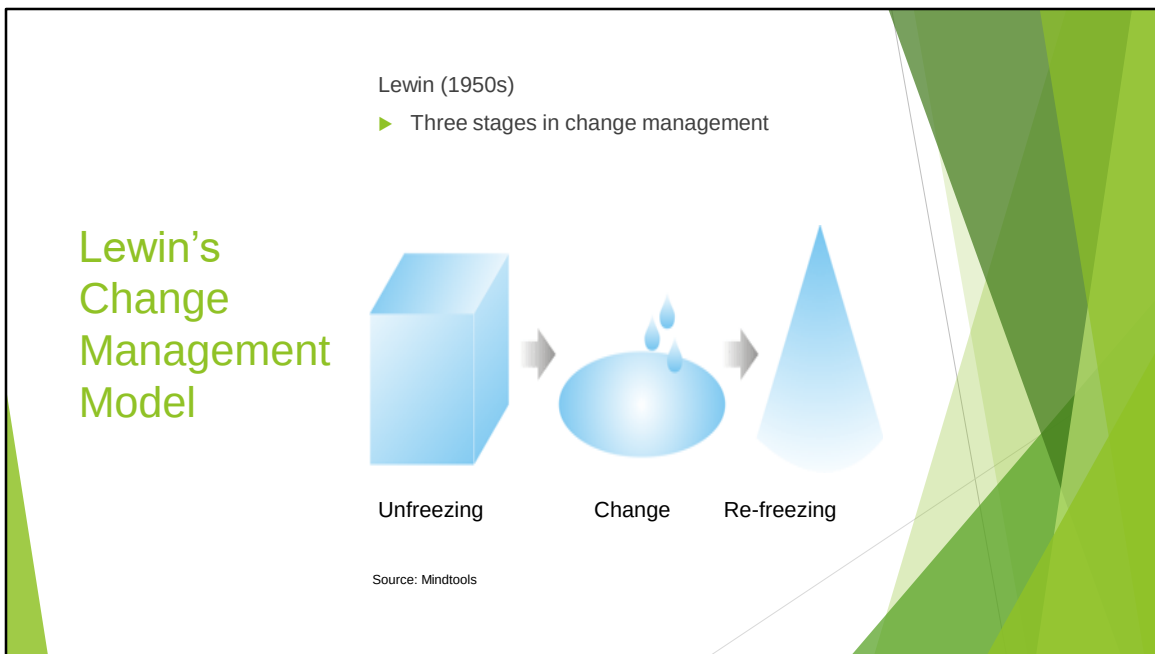
- ▶ Involvement in project teams
- ▶ Advising project leaders
- ▶ Assessing impact
- ▶ Understanding stakeholder concerns
- ▶ Communicating changes to the relevant groups
- ▶ Evaluating/reporting on the impact of initiatives
- ▶ Awareness of the human element of change and methods to facilitate this change
- ▶ Publish successes



Change is unavoidable in the organisational world; studies show organisations undergo a period of major change once every three years and smaller changes continually (CIPD 2011).

HR's role in assisting organisations with change is:

- To have a culture that embraces change – hold focus groups, conduct surveys or speak to stakeholders
- Ensure employee involvement in any changes
- Effective communication – choose appropriate method e.g. top down – senior manager hold meetings in central locations/visit different locations, bottom up – hold workshops, ask for employee ideas or two-way discussion, or one to one meetings with employees/line managers to discuss.
- Manage any conflict/expectations – listen to concerns, have empathy, assist with any development needs, have coaching and mentoring activities.
- Publish successes – always publicise successes whether individual or organisational. This will help with attitudes/positivity and may assist in future changes (CIPD 2019).



Studies show that 95% of organisations have undergone some form of transformation in the last 10 years (Boroughs 2015). Various models of change been developed over the years, one example is Lewin:

Unfreeze – the first stage of change is to prepare the organisation to accept that change is necessary. Usually most difficult and stressful stage. By challenging beliefs, values, attitudes, behaviours it can cause reactions in people but must be done in order to get the participation required.

Movement - After the uncertainty in the unfreeze stage, people begin to buy in and look for new ways to do things.

Re-freezing – as change begins to take shape, employees embrace new ways of working, the organisation is ready to refreeze. Signs of the refreeze stage is a stable organisation chart, consistent job descriptions. A new sense of stability, helps employees feel comfortable with the new ways of working (Mindtools).

Other change models you can also look at are Beer et al's Six Steps to Effective Change, Kubler-Ross Model of Change or DREC simplified Model of Change.

Delivery of HR Objectives in Organisations



Although the overall aim is the same, no two HR departments are configured the same way. Depending on the size of the organisation the HR function could be one individual or a team of HR professionals. It can be centralised (activities/decisions overseen from a central location) or de-centralised (activities/decisions made from each business unit).

- HR Generalist - knowledge & involvement in all HR areas (Recruitment & talent management, learning talent development, organisation development, employee engagement, performance & reward). Sole practitioners are always HR generalists, however it is also useful when a HR team consists of generalists in order to provide assistance if workloads of one particular area increase. Normally seen in large private sector or public sector
- Line managers - first point of contact, critical link between HR and employees, must be kept up to date with key procedures/information.
- Shared Service – provides routine administration or more complex HR tasks (often seen in councils, NHS & DVLA). Provision of common routine administration, benefits reduced costs, shared knowledge, improved quality due to more efficient processes.
- Outsourcing – purchasing of HR services from an external source. Service is provided by experts in the field, frees up time allowing concentration on

strategic issues. Vendor management.

- Consultancy – hire in consultants/experts to provide advice on certain issues/strategies, will complete task and leave, bring deeper expertise as have experience across a diverse range of clients.

Line Managers & HR



- ▶ Bringing to life HR, OD & L&D procedures
- ▶ Identify development needs and enable learning solutions
- ▶ Acting upon advice from HR, OD and L&D
- ▶ Controlling workflow by directing and guiding others
- ▶ Greater collaboration to support change.
- ▶ **Core Line Manager Activities**
- ▶ recruitment
- ▶ managing absence
- ▶ employee engagement
- ▶ discipline/grievance
- ▶ training/development.

Following the growing emphasis of business partnering model in organisations, adjustments in HR delivery have moved core activities to line managers.

Adjustments in the delivery of HR have shifted responsibility for many core activities, such as recruitment or objective setting, away from HR, devolving more responsibility to line managers to maintain records, input data, manage routine HR activities such as staffing requests, booking training or submitting payroll information. (CIPD 2019d).

Line managers have a very important role to play: the day-to-day management of people and operations, implementing HR policies and learning & development of teams and organisations.

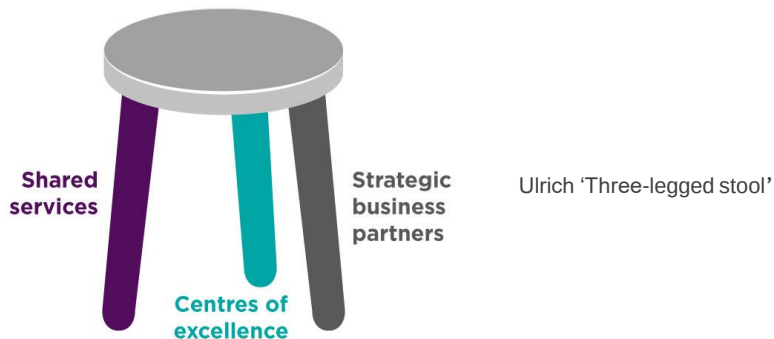
To ensure they undertake their role effectively - essential that line managers are continually developed and managed. Must be positive relationships between line managers and the employees they manage. Appropriate resources - enables access to improved/timely information supporting management tasks/staff.

Inadequate systems or line managers workloads not manageable - risk of unreliable/incorrect information.

Research shows effective line managers lead to employees feeling positive, higher levels of job satisfaction, commitment/loyalty thus leading to higher levels of performance or discretionary behaviour (going above and beyond) (CIPD 2015c).

Line Managers can deal with/resolve HR issues that align with business strategy.

HR Business Partnering



Source: CIPD

Research has shown that HR departments in many organisations have adopted various models of the HR function. Popular models such as:

- Legge (1978)
- Storey (1992)
- Ulrich (1998)
- Purcell and Ahlstrand (1994)
- Rucci (1997)

Looking at Dave Ulrich's model of a HR Function which emerged in the late 1990's, it shows a three-legged stool approach, consisting of:

- HR Business Partners – work closely with line managers to achieve organisational objectives, design and implement HR systems.
- Centres of Excellence – HR specialists (e.g. reward, employment relations) – work closely with business partners to implement the right solution.
- Shared Services – undertakes routine transactional tasks, provide advice/information for any queries. Alongside this, use of self-service technologies is encouraged (CIPD 2019c).

A HR transformational study across 300 organisations in 26 industries showed

that 35% employed the Ulrich model.

Ethical behaviour



Source: MHRM

Organisational ethics can add value to an organisation's activities by ensuring they have a positive impact on society, the environment and the economy.

Builds

- ▶ Trust
- ▶ Positive work relationships
- ▶ Reputation

“Ethical practice is the application of ethical values in organisational behaviour.” (CIPD 2019a)

Covering all aspects of organisational conduct:

- corporate governance
- employment practices
- sales techniques
- stakeholder relations
- accounting practices
- corporate responsibility

Are employees/customers treated fairly and with dignity/respect? Are suppliers paid on time? Does the organisation recognise/act on its responsibilities to society?

If organisations take their ethical values seriously it can:

- improve morale (employees/suppliers/customers/community)
- enhance reputation through having good relations with customers.
- increase long term financial performance

An organisations reputation is based on:

- delivery of its products/services
- how it treats employees/stakeholders
- how it shows responsibility/accountability towards them (CIPD 2019b).

Risks occur if organisations go against values, leading to damaged reputation, employees becoming cynical, fines from external organisations.

According to Kew and Stredwick (2010, p351) there are three elements to the definition of ethics:

- Fairness
- what is right or wrong
- rules that underpin conduct between individuals.

Ethical behaviour is essential for HR management, there must be fair treatment to all –HR needs the trust of the workforce to ensure positive relationships.

Ethical standards –ensures the reputation of the organisation –individuals will want to work for an organisation that treats its employees ethically.

Role Models – HR must act as a role model to other departments by practising what it preaches.

Evidence shows that organisations that acts ethically have increased business performance. E.g. cutting fuel costs through environmental initiatives, building trust and enhancing reputation, supporting employee engagement, retention.

Legal compliance – must ensure they comply with employment legislation which sets out the minimum standard. Legal compliance is always beneficial - avoids tribunals, reputation of the company is maintained. However, even with these regulations' employees can be disadvantaged due to other factors such as age, service contract type therefore in order to ensure true business ethics, organisations should continually develop ways to ensure fairness to all.

Corporate responsibility:

- Community – positive/negative aspects of the organisation on the public.
- Employees – rights and well-being of the workforce.
- Environment – recycling materials, carbon footprint.
- Market place – fair trading, anti-bribery.

Can you think of examples of organisations applying ethical and non-ethical behaviour? (non-ethical can range from minor to illegal).

Tesco

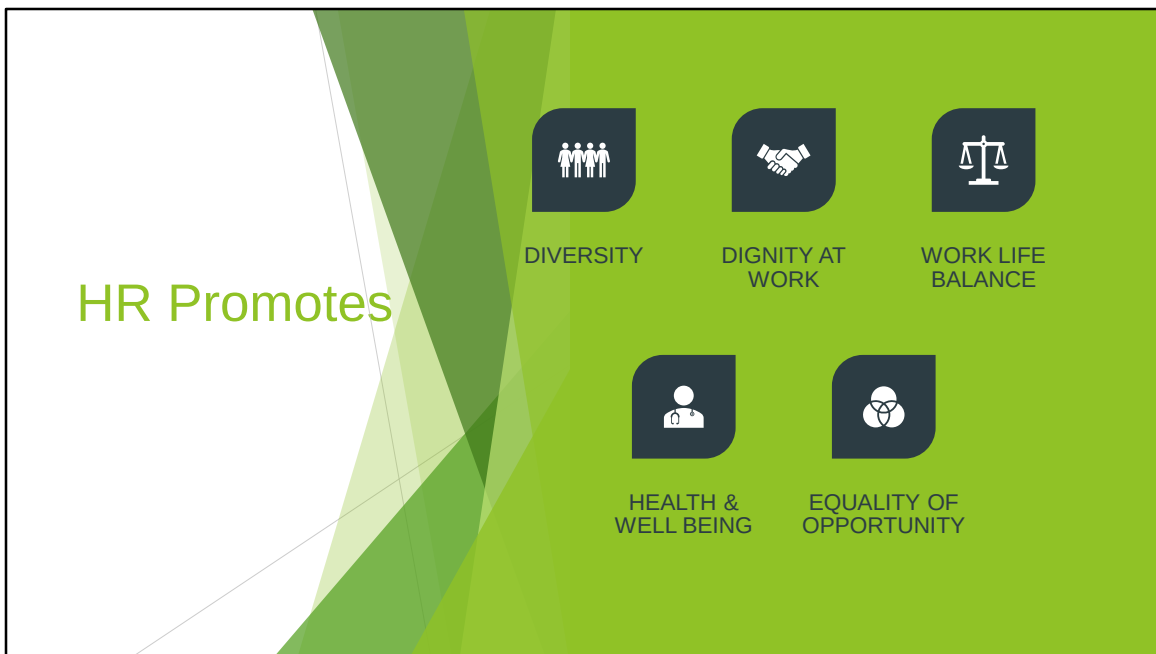
- promotes environmental issues through training to create awareness.
- diversity strategy and policies aim for a workforce regardless of age, gender,

disability, ethnicity or sexual orientation that mirrors the communities they serve. (Essay UK 2018).

Sports Direct & Primark (BBC 2017)

- fined for paying staff below NMW - state procedure will be reviewed to prevent a re-occurrence.

Other unethical examples are not advertising roles, ensuring certain individuals are short-listed/selected, re-designing role criteria to suit individuals, making payments without following relevant procedures etc.



How does HR promote good ethics?

- Diversity – monitor levels in the workplace, provide training to all managers to promote.
- Dignity at work – provide training to all, have a clear procedure in place for employees to follow should any issues occur.
- Work Life balance – ensure legal compliance, ensure provisions are in place to promote.
- Health & well-being – provide training to line managers in monitoring.
- Equality of opportunity – ensure procedures are in place on decisions for promotions/recruitment.

Legislation means organisations also have to report on gender pay gap.

The CIPD looks at situations through eight ethical lenses:

- Fairness – is it fair to all
- Merit – reward talent/hard work
- Markets – jobs and rewards should follow from voluntary market exchanges
- Democracy – everyone has a voice
- Well-being – is it good for us

- Rights and Duties – everyone is equal and given the same opportunities
- Character – work to develop the best ethical character for our roles
- Handing down – passing on responsibilities undamaged. (CIPD 2015a).

Evaluating the HR Function



Does it meet the needs of customers?

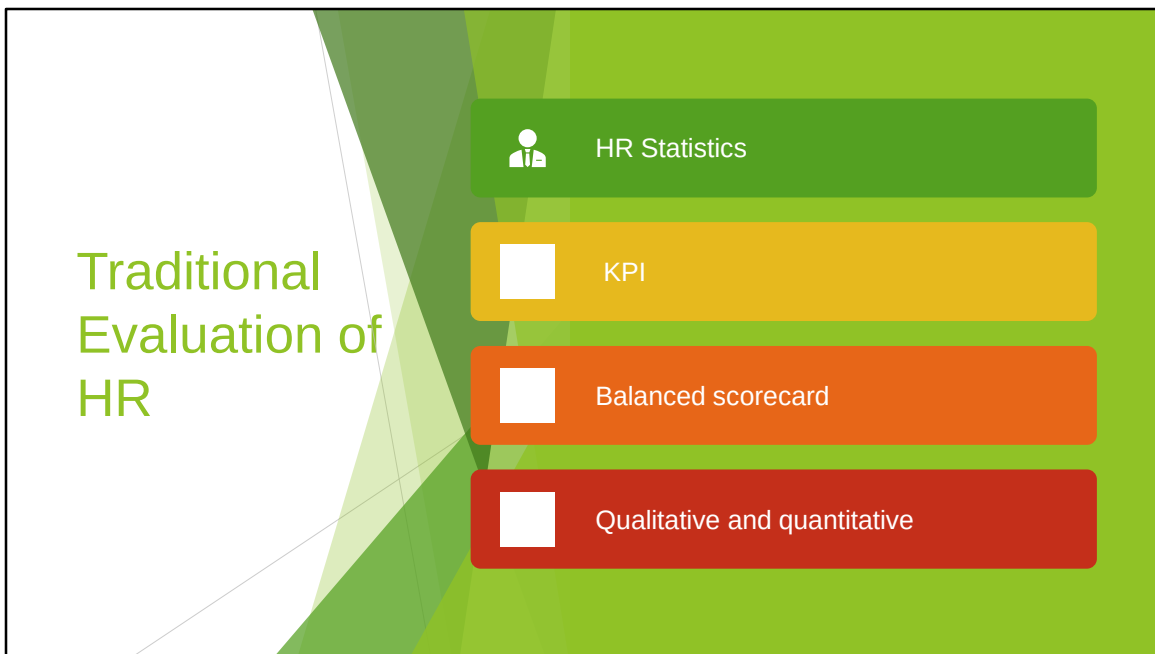


Is it efficient?



Is it effective?

For HR departments to show they add value to an organisation it must have methods of evaluating it's activities.



Common tools used:

HR Statistics – analytics for recruitment figures, costs, disciplinary / grievance, training and development, useful in benchmarking to compare internally (i.e. comparing previous years or departments) or externally (e.g. against similar organisations).

KPI's – identify a key area, set a target, assessing performance against the target.

Balanced scorecard – table designed to compare the key performance indicators to the strategic objectives of the organisation. Viewed from four perspectives:

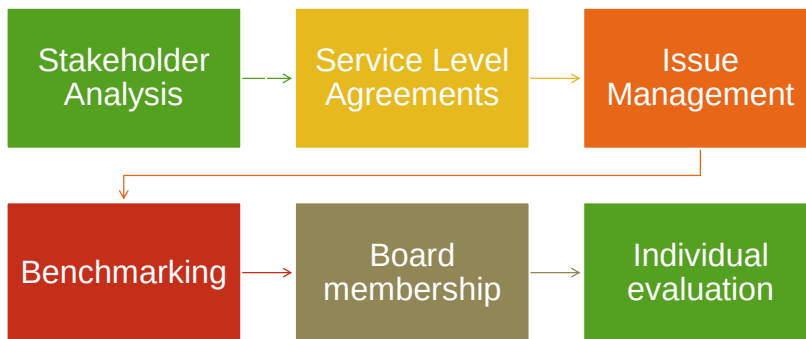
- Financial
- Customer
- Internal business process
- Learning and growth

Quantitative – employee costs, turnover, absence, grievance, discipline etc

Qualitative – feedback from employees, satisfaction surveys, evaluations, exit interviews.

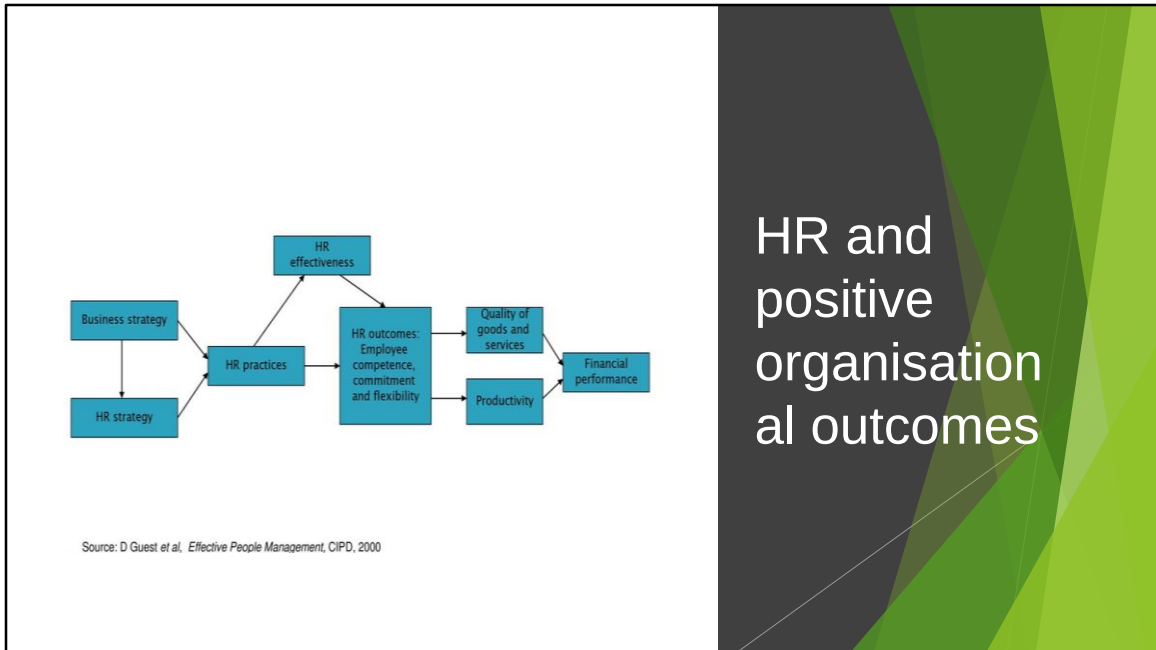
Workforce analytics link HR with business strategy.

Modern Evaluation of HR



In order to future proof an organisation, HR professionals must also start looking beyond metrics, moving away from the people performance and focusing more on long term organisational performance. This new insight-driven HR can be evaluated through:

- Stakeholder Analysis – ask key customers (line managers, senior managers etc).
- Service Level Agreements (SLA's) – SLA's to cover payroll management, inductions, contracts.
- Issue Management – have measures in place to deal with issues quickly & effectively.
- Benchmarking – against other organisations in the sector
- Board membership - ensures issues are taken seriously
- Individual evaluation – HR Professional need to look at their abilities to be insight driven to see if they possess the ability to be:
 - a) Contextual savvy – awareness of external factors
 - b) Organisational savvy – understanding people/cultures.
 - c) Business savvy – understanding how the organisation makes money



HR objectives linking directly with organisational strategy can have a positive effect on an organisations overall effectiveness. Since 1980/90's financial performance of an organisation is paramount. Having good HR practices and promoting employee behaviour is key to facilitating improved business performance.

Two well-known research studies found strikingly similar correlations.

- Purcell et al (2003) – conducted over a 6-year period, 12 UK based organisations over a range of sectors known for having sophisticated HR procedures. Aim to explore the performance-HR link through interviews with employees & managers.

Findings:

1. Job satisfaction, positive attitudes, commitment to the organisation.
2. Mission statements encouraged employees to buy in to the organisation by having a shared sense of purpose.
3. Effective line management is essential – if employees don't respect and feel motivated by their line managers then HR policies will not be bought into.

The study showed that having the right approach to HR demonstrated a link

with HR and organisations performance, however it noted that this is not an automatic link and other conditions must also be satisfied to lead to high performance.

- Harter et al (2002) – 12 question survey of employees, over 30 years to all types of industries. 7939 businesses partook covering 198,514 employees. Participants were asked to answer the questions with strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree or neither agree nor disagree.

Findings:

1. The variation in employee engagement was higher between departments in the same organisation than in different organisations – this highlighted the quality of line management.
2. A correlation of employee engagement to success was found, higher engagement led to higher success.
3. A strong relationship between employee engagement and turnover was found, those organisations with higher employee engagement had lower turnover rates.

Both studies found employees responded positively when good HR procedure were in place which led to improved organisational performance.

However, it must be noted, some argue that it is not the HRM activity that causes an organisation to perform well, but is vice versa and a successful business can enable an organisation to have profit, that can be re-invested in the HR function, thus leading to good HR procedures e.g. Apple, Google. Another explanation, organisations with good reputations can generate investment, leading to increased performance along with the existence of sound HR practices. Further arguments are that HRM practices can be used to hide issues such as low pay settlements, longer hours which in turn can lead to increased business performance (Taylor, 2016, p.197-205)

Fleetwood and Hesketh (2010), state that

- individuals shape an organisation and its performance not HR practices.
- The results from studies have been found to be inconclusive.
- hard to predict how HR practices can lead to financial gain.

According to Paauwe et al (2013, pp6-7) a more realistic approach to assess whether business performance increases when there are good HRM policies in place, would be to measure it before the policies were in place and then again afterwards, only then would the true indication be shown.



Source: HR Grapevine

Any questions?

Thank you for your time

Conclusion:

I hope that today's session has helped provide an insight into the evolving role of HR, its links to organisational strategy and performance. How HR objectives can be delivered effectively, the vital link with line managers, how HR's performance can be evaluated and why ethical behaviour has a positive impact on organisations.

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