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Student Name: Francesca Deias
Student Number: 1904623
CIPD Membership Number: 55479930

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Signed: F. Deias

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1. **An employee is emigrating and asks you if the labour market trends of their destination country are the same as in the UK. Describe the key contemporary trends in both the UK labour market and in the labour market of any other country (Germany).**

Currently Germany has a higher GDP than the UK meaning that they have a stronger economy which usually means a better standard of living and lower levels of unemployment. Looking at the employment rate both the UK and Germany average 75%, however Germany does have a much higher long-term unemployment rate, 38.1% compared to 25.1% in the UK (OECD, 2021). The impact of the Coronavirus pandemic has affected all countries. In the UK the number of payroll employees has fallen but the latest two months has seen small increases, however the unemployment rate continues to increase (Office for National Statistics, 2021).

Germany ranks higher than the UK in average wage rates with the gender wage gap being slightly higher (16%) in the UK compared to 15.3% in Germany. This could indicate a slightly greater gender inequality in the UK. Access to affordable childcare is a key factor for better gender equality in employment (OECD , 2012). There is a marked difference in the cost of childcare between the two countries, with Germany spending 1% of the average wage towards costs and the UK spending a whopping 10%. It is clear that childcare costs in Germany are significantly lower (OECD, 2021).

Work life balance is an important consideration; in the United Kingdom, about 12% of employees work very long hours compared to only 4% in Germany. The amount and quality of leisure time is important for our overall well-being. In the UK, full-time workers devote 62% (14.9 hours) of their average day to personal care (eating, sleeping, etc.) and leisure. In comparison full-time workers in Germany spend 65% (15.6 hours) on personal care and leisure (OECD, 2021). That 42 extra minutes per day will soon add up to almost 5 extra leisure hours a week in Germany.

Overall Germany ranks above the average in education, work-life balance, income, housing and subjective well-being (OECD, 2021).

2. **A new HR assistant asks you to explain the following aspects of workforce planning:**
    a. **key principles of workforce planning**
    b. **tools used in workforce planning**
    c. **how to develop a basic people plan, including succession planning.**

Workforce planning (WP) is the process of balancing labour supply against demand (CIPD, 2020a). It should analyse the current workforce in order to determine future workforce needs to identify any gaps so solutions can be implemented so the organisation can accomplish its mission, goals, and strategy (CIPD, 2018). Workforce planning can offer industry and market insights and can help to reduce labour costs, improve employee retention and increase productivity. In summary, it is about *"ensuring the right number of people with the right skills are allocated to projects or work areas to meet day-to-day needs"* but is also concerns having a long term plan so you have the best people in the right roles (CIPD, 2020a). The most important thing to consider is aligning workforce planning activities to organisational and strategic objectives (Taylor, 2019) and integration with HRM. Flexibility is key as the rate of change in the modern world means that organisations need to adapt quickly. If we are continually monitoring and assessing the labour market and other industry trends, the economy can help us forecast supply and demand so we can stay ahead of competitors and plan for the future.
There are 2 types of WP; operational (hard) and strategic (soft). Strategic WP is a holistic and long term approach that aligns with organisational strategy and goals, whereas Operational WP is a shorter-term approach that focuses on immediate needs such as skills gaps (CIPD, 2018) or recruiting to fill operational needs.

In order to develop a workforce plan we can follow 4 key stages:

1. Forecasting demand- forecast demand for future skills by using systematic techniques such as reviewing past trends to predicting future ones; using managerial judgment ie. to draw from the experiences and knowledge of senior managers and finally working back from costs which consider future budget (Wilkinson and Taylor, 2016).

2. Forecasting supply- Look at current workforce and consider how many staff are likely to remain during our workforce plan timeframe.
3. Identify gaps between demand & supply- Complete a skills audit to assess current employees and summarise results to identify skills available vs future needs (Wilkinson and Taylor, 2016).
4. Address gaps- how we can use existing resources to our advantage and look at external resources if required.

There are various tools and techniques that we can use when WP. Firstly undertaking a thorough analysis of the current workforce is key. This can be done by analysing people data to assist in identifying gaps in skill and demand. We can also use this type of data to look for trends and patterns, such as reasons people leave an organisation. Talent profiles can identify the skills and capabilities of the current workforce as this can help in a redeployment situation. A training needs analysis will highlight training gaps and can determine what development needs will be required in order to fill future roles. Scenario planning is useful in uncertain times. It assesses changes within an organisation and the external environment with the aim to predict the future of an organisation and potential situations (Armstrong and Taylor, 2020).

When implementing any action plans we should continue to monitor progress and evaluate outcomes and adapt where required, particularly in response to unpredictable events (Armstrong and Taylor, 2020). When done right WP provide agile people solutions to support future business development; a strategic WP will inform good business decisions and provide useful data such as hiring difficultIes, time to hire, attrition rates, etc, in order to identify risks and contingency plans (CIPD, 2018).

Once we have evaluated our labour market and existing resources we can begin to develop a people plan which will outline relevant talent management activities, including recruitment, performance management, retention and succession planning (CIPD, 2020).
Succession planning includes activities that are directed toward achieving sufficient numbers of employees that have the skills, knowledge and experience to step into senior vacancies when they arise, to ensure a smooth transition within an organisation (Taylor, 2019). We can use succession plans for situations such as retirement and resignations. We can look to identify successors in various ways, for example through personal development plans, coaching and mentoring activities, projects and lateral moves.
We need to consider different approaches to succession planning. Traditional succession planning is seen as a confidential and 'top down' (CIPD, 2020c), where management have already decided who they want for the role. Best practice in modern succession planning focuses on fairness, equal opportunities and inclusive working practices to develop talent and identify business critical roles within an organisation (CIPD, 2020c). We should not overlook recruiting externally for such roles, but be careful to balance sourcing externally with nurturing internally (CIPD, 2020c). When considering our succession plan we should be transparent and ensure open communication to all employees so they can express interest if they wish. The use of regular performance reviews or 1:1 meetings will give employees the opportunity to talk about their role and career, so they can direct their personal development towards the future (Clutterbuck, 2012).

Clutterbuck (2012) outlines the use of 'nine-box grids' as a way to measure individual performance and potential. Competency frameworks can be used for succession planning as they can evaluate an individual's past performance to determine suitability for a more senior role (CIPD, 2020c). When looking at management or leadership competencies we need to be open and realistic, focusing on what effective leaders will look like in the future (Clutterbuck, 2012). 360 degree feedback is a framework where subordinate employees, colleagues, and managers give feedback to an individual; a self-evaluation by the employee themselves is also completed. Although in theory this is an interesting method, research shows that the honesty of subordinate employees depends on their relationship with their manager and how well they perceive they receive negative feedback (Clutterbuck, 2012).

3. **Your Director asks for your thoughts on how the organisation can attract the talented people it requires and ensure that these people stay with the organisation. Explain different approaches an organisation can take to both attracting and retaining talent, and the strengths and weaknesses of each approach.**

One way to attract talent to ECD is to start with competitor analysis, if we know who our competition is and what they offer prospective candidates we can look to differentiate ourselves from them. A big part of this is to

consider our organisational positioning, I would say ECD is an employer of values, in which we treat our employees well but cannot always compete with market rates. Ideally we should look towards becoming an employer of choice as this in itself will attract and retain talent. This can then feed into focusing on strengthening our employer brand, as this helps us establish credibility in order to attract talent (CIPD, 2019a). At ECD we already have a strong brand, however there are ways in which we can look to improve such as overhauling our website and building a dedicated careers page where we align and promote our company values as well as show off our talented people. Our website is often the first point of contact with potential candidates and is therefore an effective recruitment channel (McCartney, 2017). We can also look at our employee value proposition (EVP), this is our unique selling point to attract talent and tie it in with our brand. We should promote our values and distinctive company culture as well as what rewards and benefits we offer. Currently we do promote this fairly well through company pages on recruitment sites such as Glassdoor and Indeed and our ratings are high, this is a great strategy as regularly we get candidates mentioning our positive company reviews on these sites. Finally, looking to improve candidate experience we can give a lasting impression on candidates and potential consumers (McCartney, 2017). A positive employer brand can also help retain talent as it improves employee perception of the organisation (Taylor, 2019).

By carefully aligning our employer brand to a social media strategy we could potentially capture and attract different demographics. Our diversity strategy is problematic, due to our rural location we are geographically challenged. By tying in a website review with social media we can also look to increase our diversity and attractiveness to different demographics. Improved diversity can in turn improve our image, creativity and improve decision making (McKinsey, 2021).

Employee turnover is costly to us in money, time and resources. We should look at why employees leave by analysing data from exit questionnaires and interviews in order to develop retention strategies. This method does have drawbacks as you cannot guarantee that employees will complete the questionnaires or be totally honest during exit interviews, making it difficult to draw any solid conclusions. To avoid this we could ask a ‘neutral party’ to conduct exit interviews (Taylor, 2019). Staff satisfaction surveys are a useful way to engage morale or attitudes on pay and benefits. Drawbacks from these surveys are that if designed poorly they don’t always explain the reasons for poor engagement (Purcell, 2010) and unless they are anonymised employees are not always honest therefore making them ineffective (Taylor, 2019).

Employee retention and reward has always been at the forefront of staff turnover, with unhappiness with pay being a major cause of dissatisfaction (Investors in People, 2018, cited in Taylor, 2019, p.336). Salaries are going up therefore businesses need to make changes in order to remain competitive (McCartney, 2017) and prevent employees leaving for better paid jobs.

A total reward system that covers all aspects of work that are valued by people, such as flexible working, pay and benefits is effective in retaining talent, however we need to consider fairness and how it is distributed. Flexible working continues to be the most sought-after benefit, along with enhanced pension packages (McCartney, 2017). By reviewing and improving our current benefit and reward packages we can attract, retain and motivate employees (CIPD, 2020g). Drawbacks are that organisations get bogged down with attempting to weigh the value of certain rewards especially if they intend to include grading in how they distribute (CIPD, 2020g). Time needs to be spent on promoting the final system and communicate it clearly so that employees are aware of what they are entitled to. We should engage employees to find out what rewards and benefits appeal to them before making any decisions.

Offering training and development opportunities can improve employee retention as organisations are seen to be investing in their people. Failure to train employees can lead to professionals looking at an employer who will provide them the training they seek (Taylor, 2019). However, Taylor (2019) also argues that training may

increase the likelihood of them leaving to pursue other opportunities. Overall training paid for by an employer appears to reduce the desire to quit (Taylor, 2019).

Effective line-management can be overlooked when considering retaining talent. Quality leadership which has "a strong, transparent and explicit organisational culture….gives employees a line of sight between their job and the vision and aims of the organisation" (Macleod and Clarke, 2009). The saying goes that 'employees don't leave bad companies, they leave bad bosses.'

4. **In preparation for input at a managers meeting*, summarise the following:**
    a. **key aspects of good practice in relation to developing job descriptions, person specifications and competency frameworks**
    b. **different methods of recruitment and selection, and the strengths and weaknesses of each**
    c. **good practice in relation to dismissal, redundancy and retirement.**

Taylor (2019) believes that in order to take a good practice approach to recruitment and selection you need to start by undertaking a job/role analysis. Undertaking job/role and competency analysis' can help to identify specific tasks and competencies that employees will be expected to undertake (Marchington and Wilkinson, 2012). From this information we can develop job descriptions, personal specifications and competency frameworks.

Job descriptions focus on the skills, tasks, areas of responsibility and performance indicators that are required for the role (Wilkinson and Taylor, 2016). They are often used when creating job adverts and as part of application packs, as they include key information for candidates such as job title, salary, location, a summary of main responsibilities, etc.

Similar to job descriptions, personal specifications look at the human factor and define the knowledge, abilities and skills required in order to be able to successfully carry out a role and can also include behavioural competencies (Armstrong and Taylor, 2020). The criteria defined in a personal specification will be fundamental in the selection process and like with job descriptions, are often used in creating adverts, are part of application packs and assist with shortlisting.

Competency analysis and subsequent frameworks focuses on personal attributes or behaviours and sets out standards required to perform efficiently (CIPD, 2020e). Such frameworks are often unique to an organisation and should link to it's core values. They are used to assist in shortlisting candidates with the key competencies. A competency framework can create a profile of superior performers and therefore will support other activities such as performance management.

Taylor (2019) identifies various different methods of recruitment:

- Internal – promotions, lateral transfers, job rotation and re-hiring former stafformer staff
- Media – job boards, social media, newspapers, professional journals, tv and radio.
- External agencies – headhunters, job centres, employment agencies, etc.
- Educational Liaison – Careers advisors, careers fairs, student services, etc.

The use of external agencies to support all or part of an organisations recruitment process is common. There are a variety of different private and government agencies that can help to increase effectiveness and efficiency (Taylor, 2019). We should understand that clear expectations need to be set from the start in order to achieve the desired results, especially considering that private recruitment agencies are costly.

Job adverts need to be carefully considered and worded in order to adhere to legal requirements and reduce risk. The way we present our advert, supporting documents and how and where we advertise also needs consideration. Job adverts should aim to reach a wide range of candidates and tie in with branding and

diversity strategies. At ECD we are a highly technological organisation and are on board with the modern increased use of technology. We have an Applicant Tracking System (ATS) to assist us with recruitment and selection. Since it's implementation and integration with our onboarding systems it has had a marked impact on reducing admin time and increasing the overall speed and efficiency of the recruitment process. We should also think about equal opportunities to apply, if we are only advertising and accepting online applications are we ruling out candidates from different demographics?

Selecting candidates has two stages: shortlisting and assessment (CIPD, 2020f). Selection methods include application procedures such as submitting a CV and/or application form; interviews; ability and personality tests and assessment centres. After shortlisting interviews are the most common practice of selection as they are often low cost, however Marchington and Wilkinson (2012) note that they are unreliable. Interviews need to be conducted by trained and well prepared individuals and should be used alongside other selection methods. At ECD we use an initial phone screen, telephone interview and final face to face competency interview alongside interview tests for certain roles. Interview tests come with a high level of administration costs as they have to be reviewed and marked, which can be time consuming and require qualified staff (Marchington and Wilkinson, 2012).

Assessment centres are where candidates complete various different tasks and assessments through activities such as presentations, work samples, cognitive tests and group role-play. These centres are predominantly used for professional or managerial roles (Marchington and Wilkinson, 2012) but can also be used for promotions or development. They should be overseen by experienced selectors to ensure objectivity consistency and equal opportunities (CIPD, 2021f). Assessment centres often have high costs and can be difficult to organise, but use of this type of selection can often show how serious an organisation is about selecting the right candidate.

Employers need to ensure that their recruitment and selection processes are fair so applicants are treated equally, fairly and no one is discriminated against. The Equality Act 2010 makes it unlawful for employers to discriminate against job applicants as a result of any of the 9 protected characteristics (CIPD,2021b). Discrimination can be direct, indirect or positive.

Dismissal is an involuntary employee turnover where a contract of employment is terminated by the employer or a fixed-term contract is not renewed (Daniels, 2019). An employee has the right not to be unfairly dismissed by their employer. Unfair dismissal cannot be claimed if the person is not an employee, has less than 2 years continuous service or is employed under an illegal contract (Daniels, 2019). There are various fair reasons for dismissal which include capability and misconduct; there must always be a fair and valid reason for the dismissal (Wilkinson and Taylor, 2016). Any issues should be dealt with early on and a fair procedure needs to be followed and should cover a fair investigation and a chance for the individual to show improvements. If after a reasonable time the employee is not meeting the required improvements then the employer should take reasonable steps to investigate potential solutions (Daniels, 2019) before disciplinary action and subsequent dismissal can be considered. To ensure best practice organisations must follow the ACAS Code of practice (2015) on discipline and grievance procedures and give the employee the right to appeal.

Another form of voluntary turnover is redundancy. Redundancy usually occurs when an employer reduces the number of its employees for economic reasons, (Taylor & Woodhams, 2016), when the employer ceases or intends to cease business or in a location of business where employees work; when the requirement of the business ceases/is expected to cease/diminish or there are changes to the type of work required (Daniels, 2019). It is good practice to follow Acas guidelines on redundancy. Employers should ensure clear, transparent and regular communication throughout the redundancy consultation. In most organisations it is clear which roles are at risk or redundancy due to economic reasons therefore a selection pool can be created. Employers

need to establish an objective, fair and reasonable selection method in order to select employees for redundancy, selection criteria can include length of service, skills and attendance record. Redundancy dismissal is where employers consult with individual employees who have been identified for potential redundancy before making any decision to dismiss (Daniels, 2019). At consultation the employee has the right to be accompanied and also the right to appeal a redundancy dismissal. We should always try to avoid or if we cannot avoid, reduce the number of compulsory redundancies. The best way to do this is with effective HR planning and forecasting, flexible working practices and incentives for early retirement (Taylor, 2019). Organisations may ask for employees to volunteer for redundancy in order to reduce the overall number of redundancies and employers may wish to offer enhanced redundancy payments to encourage this (Daniels, 2019) but this can be expensive. Other alternatives are to offer early retirement to specific individuals, freeze recruitment, end temporary or contract workers, stop overtime, pay freezes, offer flexible working, reduce hours on a temporary basis and redeployment.

Retirement is also voluntary turnover. The proportion of older people in the workforce is the highest it has ever been (CIPD, 2019b) with our aging population and workforce being a hot topic. It is unlawful for organisations to force compulsory retirement at a certain age (Wilkinson and Taylor, 2016). However, if due to age related factors, an individual is no longer able to meet the requirements of their role this has to be managed through the organisation's performance/ capability procedures. Good practice in dealing with retirement should start with having open discussions. Employees should know what is available to them and employers need to understand individuals specific needs and consider the emotional effects; open communication and building trust is key. Ensuring that line managers are adequately trained in managing absence correctly and are confident to make early referrals to occupational health and know how to signpost and support their employees health. Training should equip managers to feel confident to discuss flexible working and retirement options (CIPD, 2019b). Flexible working options that can be considered are reducing hours, homeworking, compressed hours or job sharing. Older employees may have more responsibilities to balance such as caring for partners or relatives hence where providing flexible options can support them. With an aging workforce comes an increased likelihood of medical conditions therefore organisations should invest in the health and well-being of their workforce (CIPD, 2019b) through appropriate policies. Other good practice options to consider are offering the individual to provide consultancy after retirement, flexible retirement, or a phased or gradual reduction in hours (Wilkinson and Taylor, 2016).
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