

Qualification: CIPD Diploma in Applied Human Resources

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Understanding Resourcing and Talent Planning

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By signing below, I confirm that the work/evidence presented is my own, unaided work. I understand the regulations pertaining to candidate malpractice and the action that may be taken as a result.

Signed:

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

Date: 14/06/2020

Q1. Key trends in UK and Canadian labour markets

According to OECD report from 2019, over the last decade the UK saw 3.5% fall in unemployment with 96% of labour force employed in 2018 (OECD, 2019). Canada's unemployment figures over the same period fell less sharply by 2.6% with 94.2% of labour force employed in 2018. This trend continued into 2019 with unemployment still at 5.7% of the labour market in July 2019 (Yuk, 2019). This trend is due to job losses against expectations leading to a loose labour market with fewer opportunities and more candidates applying. This would suggest unfavourable conditions for emigrating to Canada for work. Fast forwarding to April 2020, the impact of the global pandemic has had greater impact on unemployment figures with 13% of labour force out of work in Canada (StatisticsCanada, 2020).

Flexible options like Part Time jobs have been a historically strong source of employment for the UK with almost a quarter of employment in UK (23.9% in 2009) in part time roles. Contrastingly, Canada's rate of employment in part time work was 18.95% in 2019 (StatisticsCanada, 2020) which fell over the decade from 19.3% in 2009 (OECD, 2019). This downward trend is mirrored in UK with part time employment falling by 0.7% to 23.2% over the last decade (OECD, 2019).

This decline may be due to changes in the retail sector, which heavily employs part time workers. Retail remains the biggest sector for employment in Canada with 2942k employees while the UK has fallen behind Health/Social Services (3936.7k employees) with 3773.5k (OECD, 2019). There is however, a downward trend in both Canada and UK with share of employed staff in retail falling by 0.91% and 0.24% respectively. This trend which started in the last decade (Butler, 2019) is expected to continue as the international preference for online shopping, the impact in the UK of Brexit and the COVID 19 pandemic (Kollewe, 2020) reduces demand in this sector. Health and Social Services is the other top employer in both countries. The surprising growth in Canada is in real estate which is the third largest employer with 1.26% growth in employee share over the past decade (OECD, 2019) attributed to Canada's delicate 'Housing Bubble' (Haber, 2018).

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau stated his intention to enhance female employment in 2015 (CanadianPress). In the following years his feminist image has appeared to tarnish (Lyll, 2019) and this is reflected in female employment figures which stalled at 47.7% (OECD, 2019) in the following 3 years. The UK was slightly behind at 47% in 2018 which is with 0.3% growth over the last 10 years (OECD, 2019). It still appears that despite good growth in female employment, balance is still missing in UK 'top jobs' (Pidd, 2020) with the trend starting in the House of Commons where only 34% are women (Pidd, 2020).

In both countries, trends surrounding age and unemployment correlate closely. Unemployment is highest in 15-24 age bracket with the UK at 11.6% of the workforce out of work and Canada only slightly healthier at 11.1% (OECD, 2019). This trend has been attributed to longer stints in full time education (Taylor & Woodhams, 2016) but actually youth unemployment is falling in both countries with the most significant drop in the UK of 7.4% (OECD, 2019) in the past 10 years. This was eased by measures such as the government's 'Industrial Strategy' introduced mid-decade which sought to introduce younger people into the workforce; in jobs they will hopefully stay in for the future (McVey & Sharma, 2018).

Q2. Workforce Planning

Taylor & Woodhams break down workforce planning into four stages (2016, p.60) which involve forecasting the demand on skills required for the future, assessing the skills held within the current workforce, identifying missing skills and finally planning to fill gaps in said deficit. The result is better-informed decisions regarding hiring, training, development and internal promotion.

Where possible, HR should collaborate with Senior Leadership and Finance (Britnell, O, 2020) so that the cost of auditing, hiring and training staff can be integrated into organisational strategy from the beginning (Tucker, 2019, p. 16).

Identify the skills the organisation needs can take three different approaches. The first two are numbers driven: the *systematic* approach focussing on output, historic trends and required results and the *budgetary* approach, looking at the cost of hiring and training against a budget “working back from costs” (Taylor & Woodhams, 2016, p. 58). The third approach is potentially less tangible and relies on *management* instinct based on their knowledge of the company, the people in their organisation and outside influence like changes in the relevant sector (Taylor & Woodhams, 2016, p. 58).

Looking at the supply of skills, where possible organisations want to use their existing workforce avoiding expense of hiring and training. We do want some fresh talent in the business, Taylor and Woodham’s (2016, p.60) state that the CIPD recommendation is for 80:20 split between new hires and internal promotion to keep this balance.

Looking at the short and long term there may be skills the team already have but there may also be employees who are developing skills in role, with training or with external education. The tool we use will be a survey audit of all staff best conducted by line managers (Hayden, 2020) as investment in their employee’s development. Transparency with employees is important when auditing staff in this way so as not to create uncertainty or mistrust (Luca, 2019). The skills supply also concerns changes in headcount such as through natural attrition, projected absence levels and various types of paid leave. Ryanair’s stock market value dropped £320m in 2017 because they hadn’t accounted for annual leave (Faragher, 2017). It emerged they had to cancel thousands of flights due to too many pilots taking holiday at the same time, poor workforce planning in this case had huge financial impact.

When assessing the skills base in the organisation against the demand, a key tool used is a ‘competency framework’ (Taylor & Woodhams, 2016) created by breaking the desired role down into key attributes required. This will offer more clarity when it comes to identifying these skills in the organisation and help define ideal candidates at the sourcing stage (Weeks, 2020). Creating a considered and effective people plan is possible after comparing the results against the skills audit ‘identifying the gap between demand and supply’ (Taylor & Woodhams, 2016).

With the gap in skills identified, we can create a plan to have the right people in place for our future requirements. We may have already identified employees skills required or employees who could be suitable with training. This process is even clearer if our organisation has utilised succession planning, as we then have access to ‘pools of talent’ (Taylor & Woodhams, 2016) to hire from. While historically this process has focussed mainly hiring into senior leadership positions, the modern succession planning approach is to broaden our search, for other skilled or ‘expert’ positions (Weeks, 2020). Informal methods such as temporary secondments, experience shadowing or involvement in special projects enable a manager to identify ‘high potential’ talent more easily (Hirsch, 2000, p. 13) and help develop the pipeline for future vacancies. These initiatives also offer a fair, open to all, option for development (Weeks, 2020); allowing employees to feel they have some say over their future while also widening search for talent across the organisation.

One pitfall with succession planning is that internal candidates can be at an unfair advantage for select roles. If sourcing becomes “more personal than about process” (Jacobs, 2012) and the impact is losing a valuable external candidate, the balance needs to be reviewed. Another factor when sourcing external talent is to review and understand the current labour market (Britnell, O, 2020) as this will govern where to source from. One of the long-term impacts of Brexit will be a reduction in EU migrants and the impact on sectors which rely on them like retail who need to look further afield if they are to survive (CIPD, 2018).

Q3. Attraction & Retention

A factor consistently raised in attraction and retention is employee engagement. The CIPD (Gifford, 2019) define this as the motivation of an employee and commitment to their business. The benefit is “healthier, happier, more fulfilled or more motivated” employees (Gifford, 2019). As well as higher likelihood to stay, “people who like the job they do and the place they work become advocates for it” (Houghton, 2019) therefore benefiting the employer brand which will then attract new talent.

The first method to review will be the development of the employer brand, which sells the culture of the company to outsiders. With social media, all companies have an image that prospective employees will see and developing a strong employer brand is about refining this (Houghton, 2019). Identifying the current culture of the organisation helps in developing the brand. This asks which values are actively, considered and lived on a day-to-day basis. (Gifford, 2019). If the right kinds of people are attracted to this through accurate branding then the culture is strengthened for future. Surveying staff who stay at the company may give us an indication of both things that are working and can be developed but also what is likely to push employees away (Thomas, 2018). In her case study of 100-year-old accounting firm Menzies, Burt (2017) looks at the way they moved from their “reliable but boring label”. By using promoters within the company in the form of 15 brand ambassadors, they were able to isolate what made it a great place to work and use this in their rebrand.

A pitfall of developing an employer brand is when it doesn’t reflect the actual culture of the organisation (Banta, 2019) It is important not to “oversell the job” (Green, 2019) as however strong, this brand will not last unless built on a truthful reflection of what it’s actually like to work there (Houghton, 2019). Taylor and Woodhams (2016, p. 73) use the example of Google when staff were disappointed as they thought they were “entering the promised land” when they got the job but found reality didn’t match the dream they were sold. This is why we need senior leader buy in for this process to deliver results. If the existing culture isn’t attractive to prospective employees or the financial backing isn’t there (Taylor & Woodhams, 2016, p. 71) then it isn’t just the brand that needs to change and the company-wide change may be required (Houghton, 2019).

Learning and Development plans are another strategy for retention and attraction. Current employees may feel disengaged due to lack of development or bad relationship with their line manager (Green, 2019). The contemporary approach separates development from progression and look at “sideways” moves that help develop skills in preparation for later progression (Green, 2019). This not only supports employee retention but also contributes to succession planning. Putting this in the hands of employees is important. According to Lindor ('Why great people quit good jobs', 2018) A “thriving culture” is one in which “everyone is empowered to take charge”. Leadership teams have a large part to play to ensure employees feel they have a stake in their own future. A future, which is more likely to be within the same company if they are feel invested in and empowered by their leaders (Gifford, 2019).

In terms of attraction, putting learning into the employer brand can have a big impact on attracting new talent. Even entry-level shop roles in Apple (Apple Retail, 2020) include “professional development” as part of the job description to entice wider talent pool. While learning and development is an important contributor for employee retention, for some it can also be a cause of stress or unnecessary pressure. Professor Cooper at the University of Manchester blames the way “mental ill health has flourished” on the overuse of this and points to a more balanced approach looking at work-life balance as a solution (Sharp, 2019). Much of the groundwork for a good understanding of an organisation’s development plan happens at the interview and induction stage where expectations are set (Green, 2019) to avoid disappointment for employees expecting progression. This “psychological contract” (Taylor & Woodhams, 2016, p. 72) is a delicate process and employers need to be careful about making promises which could be perceived as false.

4. Recruitment, Selection and Involuntary Turnover

At the recruitment stage, we look to advertise and attract talent through the following processes. The first step is to create job descriptions so candidates know what roles entail. These are the result of job analysis through surveys and market analysis (Taylor & Woodhams, 2016, p. 63). Included in the job description are the tasks, responsibilities of the role, equipment, systems, pay, location, detail about the role’s position with the team, and if required, detail about the team the successful applicant joins (Taylor & Woodhams, 2016, p. 64). This job description can be used throughout the selection process and continue to be used once the new employee starts; giving clarity at induction and used as benchmark during performance reviews so it’s important it is accurate (Green, 2020). After defining the job, the next two processes will define the sort of candidates we are looking for. The first, the person specification, will focus on the skills or qualifications required, whether gained through education or relevant experience.

The next is looking at character qualities sought in an ideal candidate. It’s important that the characteristics used aren’t specific to gender, age or race, unless vital for the role in question such as advertising a female carer specifically for a female patient (Acas, 2020). Appearing to discriminate also narrows our candidate pool so should be reviewed. (Lewis, 2017).

When selecting competencies such as from the Lominger architect (1996), some organisations may have “core competencies” (Taylor & Woodhams, 2016) which are desirable in all employees to strengthen the culture of the organisation, however, it is recommended by the CIPD (Weeks, 2020) to have around twelve competencies per role. Much less and the framework becomes too vague and too many it becomes hard to identify them in candidates (Weeks, 2020).

There are many approaches when it comes to selection but the most commonly used are one-to-one interviews (Green, 2019). The benefit of an interview is the opportunity for back and forth conversation. The candidate has more opportunity to ask their own questions and in turn make their own decisions on whether this is the right place for them to work (CIPD, 2015, p. 7). Interviews were historically unstructured with questions tailored specifically for the individual candidate. This can be unfair as each candidate gets a different experience with some at a disadvantage. Because the interview structure is so open, an interviewer may only get a vague understanding of the capabilities of the candidate or even build a friendly bond during the interview leading to increased risk of bias (Green, 2019). In a contemporary approach using the competency framework instead, the structure of interviews can be much more consistent and fair; with the same situational questions based around the same competency asked of every candidate (Taylor & Woodhams, 2016, p. 66) leading to comparable results.

Assessing applicant’s ability or knowledge at an early stage through written testing can be an effective way for larger organisations to whittle down large candidate pools, removing applicants

who do not hit the requirements (McCartney, 2017, p. 27). These will often be structured, measurable tests like IQ tests. These questions will often have one correct answer which makes them fair for the candidates and clearer for the employer to analyse and make swift decisions (Taylor & Woodhams, 2016, p. 66).

At a later stage or with a smaller candidate pool, personality testing is a good way to get to know the candidates better (Taylor & Woodhams, 2016, p. 66). When an employer is looking to strengthen the existing culture in their organisation (Gifford, 2019) this may be a safer approach to ensure they get the right candidates. In some ways, this is closer to the interview method of selection with the employer deciding whether someone is a good fit by asking open questions, which can be answered in a variety of ways, and measuring the responses against the competency framework (Taylor & Woodhams, 2016, p. 66). It could be argued that as this form of assessment will be somewhat subjective it may not make this a fair an approach and that's where measuring answers against the responses from a "norm group" (Green, 2019) which represent the statistically standardised response for this question is advised.

Historically, retirement age was set at 60 for women and 65 for men (Taylor & Woodhams, 2016, p. 74). The changes in UK employment law designed to avoid age discrimination in 2011 (Daniels, 2019) meant that employees have the flexibility to stay on if they wish and employers obligated to accommodate flexible methods to allow this. The only exception is professions where age becomes a barrier for the employee to complete work, for instance a role where physicality is crucial such as a patrolling police officer. In these instances a 'employer justified retirement age' (Daniels, 2019, p. 74) can be enforced but in other cases a flexibility is required. In these instances, a transparent, collaborative approach where employer and employee can discuss the future is recommended (Acas, 2020) with options and requests such as change in working hours or duties undertaken considered (Taylor & Woodhams, 2016, p. 74).

When an employee leaves the organisation involuntarily this is defined as dismissal. Taylor & Woodhams (2016, pp. 74-75) narrow the causes of dismissal down to two types: *conduct*, when the employee has acted in a way that breached company policy, and *capability*, where an employee's poor performance because of either poor health or a general inability to complete the work required is to blame. Dismissal should be the last resort and attempts to resolve issues informally with a "quiet word" (Acas, 2020) should be taken to avoid stress for either party or potential legal action. As Taylor & Woodhams (2016, p. 75) state, If it comes to formal disciplinary procedures, to protect the employer and employee, it is vital that the Acas guidelines on dismissal are followed. Key points of this guidance are written documentation or letters detailing each stage to the employee, investigative meetings to gather all facts and ensuring employee's rights to representation are being followed (Acas, 2015).

When considering redundancy, as with dismissal, it is important to explore all options before final decision is made. If the issue the company is facing is financial, other cost-saving changes should be explored to avoid losing personnel (Taylor & Woodhams, 2016, p. 75). Removing overtime pay or reducing wages altogether could be possible solutions but it is recommended to consult staff for feedback on the situation before coming to a decision as they may also have ideas which will help and transparency will be important for morale (Acas, 2020). Voluntary redundancy or early retirement could be a result of these conversations and would avoid losing loyal workers but it is important to have these options for all for fairness (GOV.UK, 2020). Another trigger for redundancy would be the lack of need for the particular role the employee is in. This could be the result of workforce planning (Taylor & Woodhams, 2016, p. 59) and in which case, redeployment options could be available for the affected employee as skills analysis is already part of this process.

If redundancy is the only option, as with dismissal, following the correct legal procedure is essential. Given the psychological and workload impact that redundancy can have it is important to be transparent and supportive to both the employee who is affected but also remaining staff under additional pressures (Taylor & Woodhams, 2016, p. 75).

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