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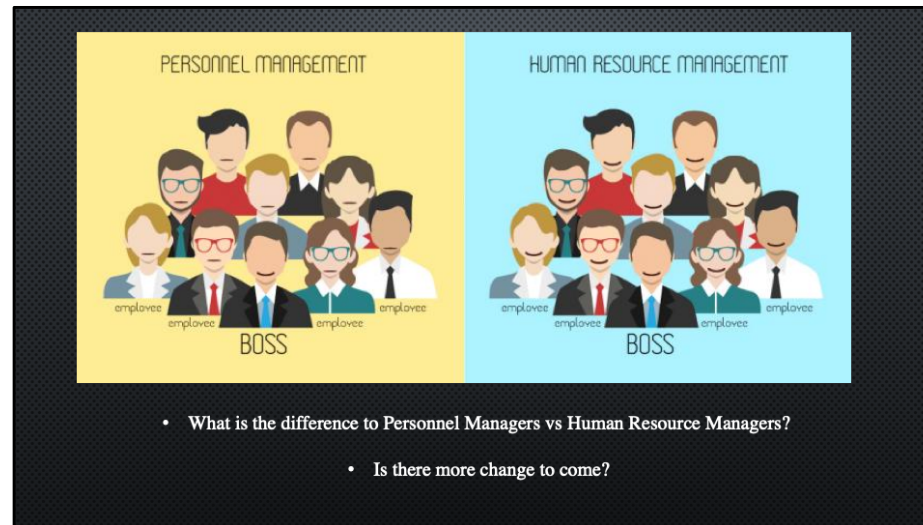
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UNDERSTANDING THE CONTEMPORARY HUMAN RESOURCE FUNCTION

BY SARAH CHISLETT

What we will cover off in the session:-

- Understanding of the HR Function and how it has evolved
- HR Services and How we deliver them
- Change within HR – Kotters 8 steps
- Three legged - Stool
- Ethical HR
- How is the HR contribution evaluated
- HR and Positive organisational outcomes.



When we think of HR what do we think?

The evolution of HR has been quite a journey and only within recent years has the HR role and the importance it plays within a business has begun to be recognised. When you ask an employee what they think the job of a HR manager is their answers will always have a differing opinion, for some individuals they think role is to control absence or recruitment for others it's the understanding of employee engagement or attrition and for many their answer would be 'I don't know'.

HR managers used to be known as personnel Managers around the time of the industrial revolution especially within manufacturing establishments. The role became established if the workforce was large enough and the role of a HR manager would be to control wages, absence and employee welfare. This was the starting point for HR within the workforce. The Personnel role quickly developed with innovated ideas to support absence, training and managing performance. Soon there became a need for Trade unions, and this then sat under the personnel manager job descriptions to work in partnership with these organisations.

By the 1990's it had soon become clear that there was more to a HR role than managing wages. Employees behaviours was very topical and there was a keen desire for personnel managers to become more dynamic and this was the beginning of Human Resource Managers. The new focus would become development, loyalty and recruitment. Human resource managers become key players within the business and had to work hard to improve the workplace environment giving them promising benefits a range of training and development options (Taylor and woodhams,2016).

As the turn of the century approached there was soon to be another change with HR. Times were changing there were improvements in technology and knowledge allowing the HR function to become a Business critical. HR was now referred to as Strategic Human Resource Managers, they were assets to any business. The role within HR was now to align individuals and teams plans with the business strategy. The new role would need require HR practices aligning to the organisation's strategy, a keen approach to development and training, Talent planning, dealing with the culture of the business and ensuring we can measure how as SHRM we can prove how we add value to our business. (Taylor and woodhams,2016)

The CIPD (2010) Next generation HR report states that the evolution to HR is not complete, according to CIPD there are two more objectives that need to be achieved, firstly is future – proofing of organisation's – allowing the HR function to be future fit to support the business improving the way we manage. The second would to be insight driven the understanding of what we do but also why we do it.



Through HR there are several different approaches of what good looks for like HR however this is dependent upon the organisation. Taylor and Woodhams (2016) describes them as the traditional approach are the Taylorism vs Humanism approach. Taylorist approach also known as scientific management was used when designing large factory jobs, the Humanist approach was the flaw of dehumanising work with the Taylorism approach. Taylorist approach is systematic and involves great detail of the tasks required. This was deemed bad for business as it created a disengaged workforce with high absence and no job satisfaction.

An alternative humanist approach which came about in the middle of the twentieth century it gave employees higher levels of job satisfaction making them more motivated within their role. This progressed to organisations being able to attract and retain staff, reduction in absence and highly motivated teams.

Pluralist vs Unitarist is the link between the employee and the organisation. A unitarist assumes that that employees and employers share the same long-term objective whereas Pluralists believe have different views as employees will focus on high wages, better hours employers will focus on labour turnover, flexibility and productivity.

Bureaucratic vs Pragmatic is based upon perception, in certain organisations HRM is characterised by the presence of bureaucracy. This is based on having written policies to abide by and allowing people to be treated equally. Pragmatism is the complete opposite allowing there to be as little ruling as possible allowing managers to treat good and bad employees differently.

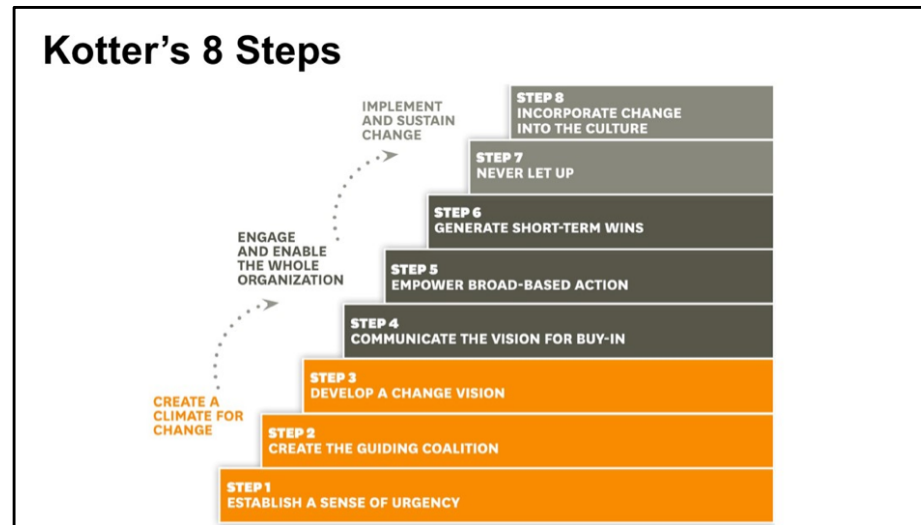


Change work is known as Transformational work due to required need of the business change or continuous improvement. Change management requires support from HR as it involves the controllable which is the business and its processes but also involves the uncontrollable which is people and what the change will mean to them (Taylor and woodhams,2016).

In any HR role you will be involved in could be reviewing and changing policies, Changes to terms and conditions Pay, Reward, Careers and the way we communicate throughout our organisation. Using HRD Interventions we can contribute to all levels of change, whether we are supporting someone moving from an administrative role to a more specialist role or if we need to create a new policy and need to compile a team and use the appropriate stakeholders accountable. All of these would be completed through HR and support by transformational change. Guest and Conway (2001) suggest that contrary to popular belief employees generally have a positive thought process when it comes to change.

Change is very demanding and required lost of resilience.

Research indicates that we undergo major business change once every three years whilst smaller changes is continuous (CIPD 2014)



Kotter has an 8-step approach to change which allows you to have a structure to ensuring success when dealing with change. (Greene, 2018)

1 is to create a sense of urgency, as with any need for change is to communicate the change and let others know why we feel there is a need to change things. This message should be consistent across all work levels and should give them enough detail, so they don't end up feeling fearful of the change.

2 is to build the change team; the change team should consist of different elements of employees from key stakeholder to specialists. No change can be delivered in silo, so it is important to remember that you will only succeed if you have the support of a team.

3 is to formulate the vision, once you have shared your changed plan and brought your team together it is important to have one concrete vision for all to work together on. For the task to succeed you would need to have specific direction and goals for success.

4 is to communicate the vision, as a general rule this would normally be in the form of an announcement. It would need to be effective and detailed. It is important to allow the audience to ask questions and try and answer them

or take away their questions, so they feel part of the change process and allow them to be fully brought into the process.

5 is to remove any of the barriers linked to change, by now you should have everyone on board with why you are changing things however there may be certain elements stopping you from succeeding. This could be something as simple as training to do what will be expected of them in their new role. This will need to be built into your plan to ensure success.

6 is to create short term wins, being able to maintain enthusiasm for something over a potential long period of time is a challenge in its self and employees may start to lose interest. You should consider having mini goals instead of having one long term goal. Quick wins will keep employees motivated through the initiative.

7 is to maintain momentum, a few quick wins won't make your initiative a success, there may be changes which have been successful, but you need to reflect and think about the things you have changed are they right could you improve? Are there any risks? Are you being the best you can be?

8 is the final step, and this step is to actually make the changes you have made stick, if your employees can't remember anything that you have said within a short space of time your initiative won't succeed and you will be back to the beginning. It is important to remember to document any changes and ensure you enforce the change. You need to be the driving force.



David Ulrich (1997) produced a model known as the “Three-legged stool model” this was his creation of associating HR into 3 different categories. These were known as shared services, centres of excellences and Business partners.

The shared services role was the administrative part of the role and ordinarily would be carried out on centralised teams. This is known as Transactional work which can be outsourced.

The centres of excellence are the ones who are experts in certain fields of HR and would guide and support colleagues in their areas of expertise, this could be developing areas such as reward, learning or talent management.

Business partners are HR generalists who work alongside team managers and provide support for case work dealing with individuals within their departments. They will be the ones ensuring the strategy is being aligned to the business.

Ulrich's model links centralisation with decentralisation with the aim to blend effectiveness and efficiency. Centralisation is the traditional approach where a HR manager has staff to report to whether directly or indirectly some roles would be carried out by HR officers where as some specialist work like training or recruitment would be carried out by specialists on the company's behalf. Decentralisation is where HR staff are required in most departments and would report to one local manager ensuring they are all effective at their roles would be priority.

The CIPD (2010) State that a survey showed 30% of large organisations follow Ulrich's model (Taylor and woodhams,2016).



The role of HR would be a support function for effective management and this builds from the bottom up to the top down, there is varying levels of HR support depending upon where you sit within a business.

Some organisations use a shared service approach these are used for support functions such as Recruitment or IT. This is used to provide a corporate service across large organisations. There are two main features which they use technology to complete admin tasks and specialist knowledge and insight. Other organisations use Outsourcing which is using an external source to complete some of their daily tasks. If large organisations such as Factories, Call centres and hospitals outsource to catering staff and cleaners.

Over recent years there has been an increase in outsourcing for more support functions such as IT, finance and Recruitment.

Woodall et al (2009, p244) states that transactional work was the work that is most likely to be outsourced as this was the work that could be repeated numerous and still have high levels of results.

One thing that is becoming more popular is Consultancy work, Organisations hire HR consultants to provide support and guidance on all people related queries and policies. These people may be self-employed or come from

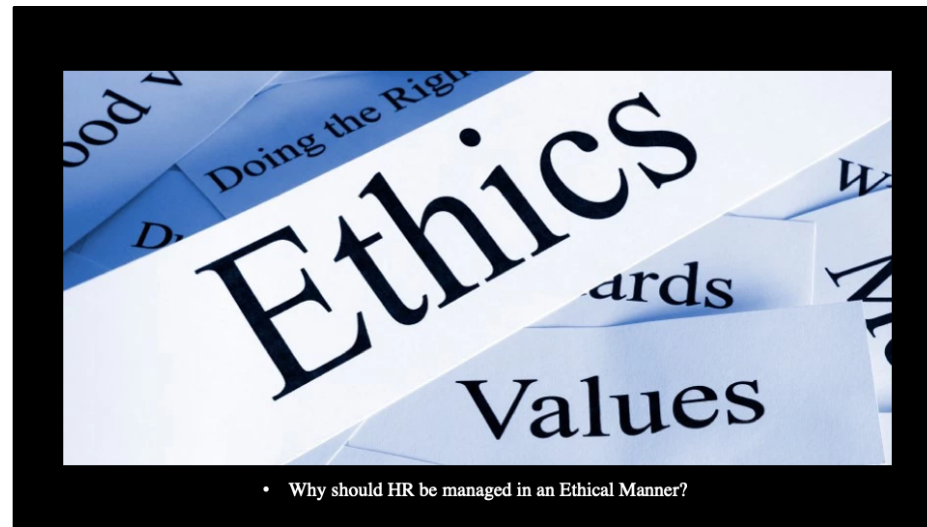
a consultancy firm. Due to the amount of expertise consultants have to the ever-changing clients they tend to bring high levels of changes expertise (Taylor and woodhams,2016).

Every member of a business would have a line manager and they all have their own responsibilities in monitoring their team's performance. Line managers are the first in line to deal with any employee queries but should work with the HR team effectively to support and manage any people queries. It is important that all communication and changes are briefed correctly, and that regular update training takes place. It is key to remember the more issues that line managers can deal with the more opportunities the HR role would have to work on the strategic issues allowing them to be a key part of any business.

CIPD (2019) State that for any line manager to be effective they themselves need to be managed, they need a strong framework and would be more likely to go onto lead high performing teams if they are well looked after with regards to their own development, Supported in their role, have a sense of job satisfaction and a healthy work life balance.

There is a growing need for Business partnering with HR and the need to link towards the business strategy. This has empowered line managers to work closer with HR and their decision making around people aspects. This provides a proactive approach when dealing with issues as it allows all aspects and the business to be taken into consideration when trying to deliver a business strategy (Taylor and woodhams,2016).

One of the key factors for all line managers would be to act ethically within their roles, Line managers would be expected to take a fair and consistent approach having no favorite's when managing their team.



Kew and Stredwick (2010, p351) state that ethics has three core elements Fairness, deciding what's right and wrong and the practices and rules which underpin the conduct desired between individuals and groups (Taylor and woodhams,2016).

Dignity at work, work life balance and health and wellbeing as any of these following categories could see you being accused of being unethical should you not consider the implications of not following Ethical behavior is deemed as essential when dealing with relationships in your team as your line manager should be someone who you could trust its build part of your brand and reputation and is a key factor when someone is deciding if they want to work for a certain organisation (Taylor and woodhams,2016).

If a line manager was seen to promote a new colleague within a business to a more senior position as they had a pre-existing relationship this would be seen as unethical as there could be underlying factors as to why that person had been promoted over a colleague who had longer tenure and had been wanting to develop and showed all the correct behavior's of a future leader. Line managers would be expected to adhere to policies when managing

people initiates such as development, pay and reward. Line managers would be expected to be role models and to champion this ethical behavior to the whole business. Line managers would also need to play a part in the ethical decision making of themselves and team and promoting a culture where things are done the right way.

When we think about ethics it is important to consider Equal opportunities, Diversity, them. For example it was brought to attention in the beginning of 2017 that there potentially was a gap in gender pay. The equal pay act 2010 states both men and women should get paid equally if they do the same job however due to the allegations raised this led to a massive investigation with organisations having to investigate if there was an unfair disadvantage with the way organisations paid you're pending upon your gender (CIPD 2018). Another ethical legislation is health and safety at work act 1974, this act would be depend upon employees completing routines correctly to ensure we have a safe place to work and there may be occasions where this legislation falls down causing risk to employees(CIPD 2018). Shared parental leave is one of the best examples of ethical legislation showing how we are involving and are inclusive of gender and rights when having a baby slowing both parents to spend equal time with their new born, unfortunately this is currently under review as there has been very little take up on it (CIPD 2018), is this due to lack of knowledge or is it due to the ethical world we live in and people's opinions on what we 'should do'.



HR's contribution to the workplace hasn't always been deemed as effective, for a long time HR was known as 'Pink and fluffy' Taylor (2011, p254).

In order for HR to demonstrate the value added it's important to have an evaluation tool to understand how the activities that are being worked on have landed and how effective they are. There are numerous ways this can be done and some of most common include KPIS, Bench marking, and staff scorecards. KPIS identify aspects of the job role that are critical to support with achieving business objectives.

These KPIS would be set using a smart objective and would be measured against a set target ie, Supporting short term absence to under 3% weekly. This links alongside bench marking, this is data which is collated in isolation i.e absence, disciplinary and grievances or appeals. This information will allow us to understand what goes on in certain departments at certain time and to understand why things altered during that period. The staff scorecard is a great visual tool to help understand how performance measures relate to the business strategic objectives. Each department they would have their own scorecard with specific measures that relate to their area and however this

shows all areas of the business are working towards the same objectives i.e if someone was in training, we could monitor their absence during their onboarding period which could link to bench marking and KPI'S (Taylor and woodhams,2016).



I have researched 2 different articles with some similar and diverse opinions on Examining the links between HR Practices and Processes and Organisation Performance (CIPD 2016) and The impact of HR practices, HR effectiveness and a 'strong HR system' on organisational outcomes.(Guest. D and Conway. N 2011)

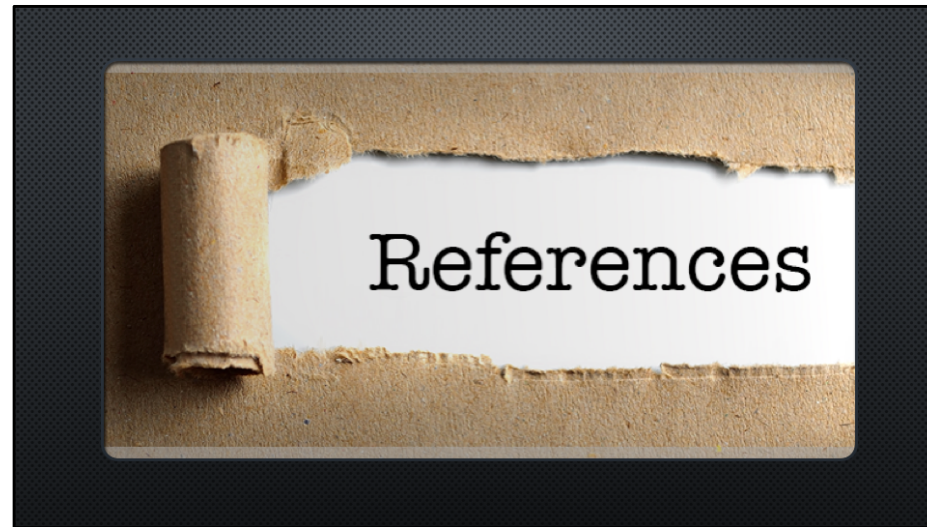
The first article focuses hugely upon HR practices and policies and goes into great depth with finding out information for across the world with multiple cross sectional (Appelbaum 2000) , Longitudinal (Patterson et al 1997) and Comparative (Stavrou et al 2010)data researches. These reaches link to Employment security, work life balance and cultural workplaces to name a few. Not all of the research shown was positive, there was part of the article where it was stated that 'the high commitment bundle' was a way to get staff to work harder for what they were entitled too.

Guest (2011) states that there was no definitive view on research as it has not be clarified enough upon what it is they should be researching.

There was an abundance of data collated for this article however; having read 2 articles on similar topics the seconded seemed to have a better level of analyses and collective data. The author did reflect at the end to state that HR is important to gain commitment; the way we communicate and implement projects determines our success. The role of line managers has become more prevalent in delivering HRM policies.

The second article went straight into detail of how HR practices and implementation is important, the buy in off stakeholders and their input with how we can ensure HR practices are effective. (Bowen and Astraff 2001) state the HRM will be better if there is a 'strong HR system' i.e ensuring consistency with policies.

There was a similarity between the 2 pieces of research which stated the research which had been carried out and the way we measure the effectiveness of HR is all different and hasn't been clarified enough to give a definitive answer. Which takes me back to my original question when we think of HR what do we think?



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