

Qualification: CIPD Diploma in Applied  
Human Resources

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# Understanding the Contemporary HR Function

## The Function of HR

# Introduction

This presentation will introduce you to the purpose of the HR Function and its main roles and activities in contemporary organisations.

Focusing on the aims and objectives of HR and how they are continuously evolving we will explore the different ways of delivering HR objectives in organisations and also why ethical need to be taken into consideration.

We will also look at how HR contributions can be evaluated and the links between HR activity and positive organisational outcomes.

# Aims

Thank you for attending this session on introducing you to the contemporary HR Function.

## Objectives:

- To understand the main HR activities and purpose of the HR function in organisations.
- To understand the different ways of delivering HR objectives
- To understand the role of ethics in HR.
- To understand how the HR contribution can be evaluated to achieve positive outcomes in an organisation.

# The Function of HR

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## What is the purpose of HR?

To support the delivery of organisational strategy and objectives through effectively managing its people and their performance (Wilkinson and Taylor, 2016).

Therefore HR strategy needs to be aligned with the strategy of the organisation as a whole.

The purpose of HR is to support the delivery of organisational strategy and objectives through effectively managing its people and their performance (Wilkinson and Taylor, 2016, p.22). HR strategy needs to be aligned with the strategy of the organisation as a whole. HR are there to make sure that in the pursuit of improving work to be more efficient and productive, that the human element is preserved (Marchington et al, 2016, p.141).

# The Function of HR- CIPD Profession Map

The Chartered Institute for Personal Development (CIPD) sets out professional standards for individuals specialising in Human Resource Management (HRM) and offers support to members so they can make an impact in their standards for individuals specialising in organisations.

The CIPD Profession Map is a useful tool as it describes the professional areas and what behaviours and skills HR professional require.

The fundamental purpose of the people profession is to champion better work and working lives. Everyone connected to the world of work has a role to play in delivering this, which is why it sits at the heart of the new Profession Map (CIPD, 2020).



New Profession Map. © CIPD 2018

The CIPD have been “championing better work and working lives by setting professional standards for HR and people development, as well as driving positive change in the world of work.” (CIPD, 2020). The CIPD Profession map, originally launched in 2009 has since evolved into the New 2013 Profession Map, which takes into account developing HR objectives. The Map is a useful tool which describes the professional areas and what behaviours and skills that HR professionals require in order to be successful. It also details the competencies that HR professionals will need in the foreseeable future (Woodhams, Perkins and Wilkinson, 2016, p.110).

# The Function of HR

What are the objectives of the HR function?

- Recruitment
- Employee performance and development
- Employee engagement
- Employee well-being
- Ethical management
- Reputation-building
- Legal compliance

In essence the HR function is mainly there to attract and retain individuals with the right skills and develop them to maximise performance and to engage them into the organisation (Wilkinson and Taylor, 2016, p.22).

# The Function of HR

## Transactional and Transformational HR

- Transactional - Admin tasks

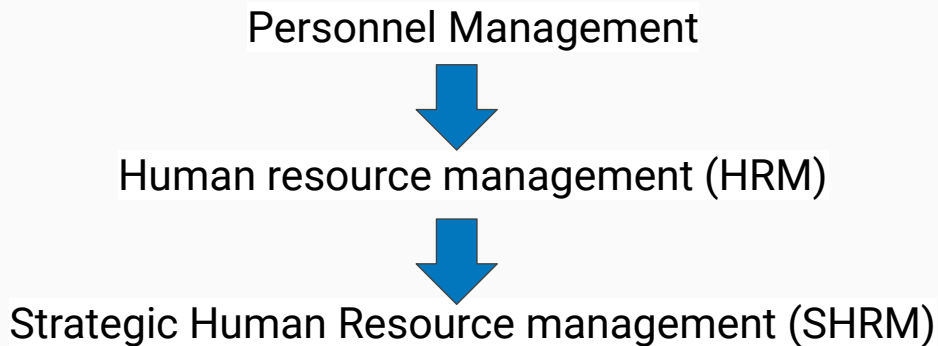


- Transformational - Continuous improvement



HR work can be seen as transactional or transformational. Transactional work refers to transactions such as basic administrative activities like payroll and maintaining employee. Transformational HR relates to continuously seeking improvement and effective change management- the activities that are seen to add the most organisational value.

# The Function of HR- Evolution



Over time the HR profession has evolved through the various models.

**Personnel Management-** Dating back to the industrial revolution, businesses set up departments dedicated to the welfare of workers and to deal with functions such as payroll, employee records, recruitment, training and productivity.

**HRM-** Towards the 13th century the focus came onto productivity rather than money. A more dynamic approach which looked at workers as valuable and worth developing and retaining led onto driving recruitment, worker commitment, benefits and training & development (Wilkinson and Taylor, 2016, p.23). Factors that shape HRM include the organisations strategy, the organisations characteristics (i.e. size, industry, etc) and external factors.

**SHRM-** The model of today has evolved since the end of the century and with the development of global markets and technology moved the HR function to the forefront of shaping organisations.

# The Function of HR- SHRM

Strategic Human Resource management (SHRM):

- Aligning with Organisational strategy
- Fostering a healthy psychological contract in a context of short term employment rather than job security
- Linking compensation to contribution
- Training and development to encourage innovation
- Knowledge management and talent development
- Employee engagement
- Motivation through enriching the work experience
- Performance and talent management as opposed to appraisal
- Cross-cultural issues
- Measuring value added by HR activities

(Wilkinson and Taylor, 2016, p.24)

Today we look towards Strategic HRM, of which activities include:

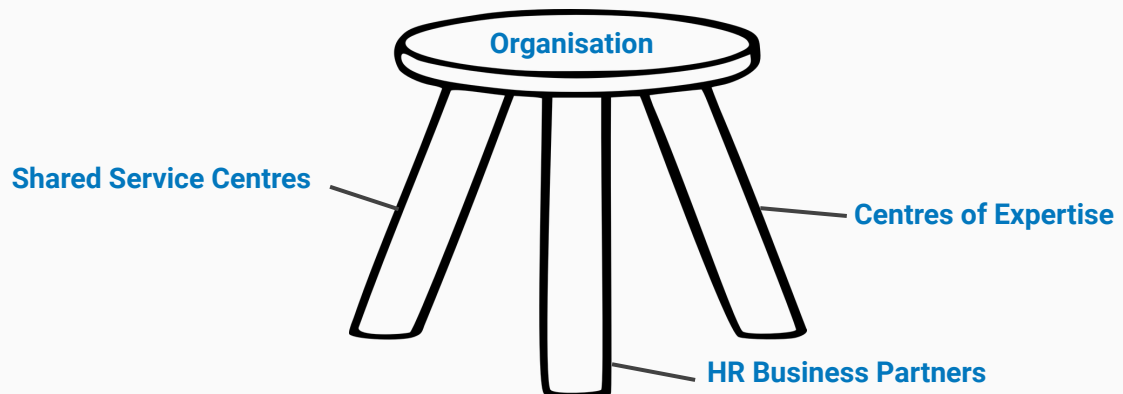
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The HR function will continue to evolve with society, with a big focus being on technology, future proofing business and being insight driven. Organisations need to become agile and look to build future proof cultures and be able to respond quickly to challenges (Wilkinson and Taylor, 2016, p.24).

# Delivering HR Services

# Delivering HR Services- Ulrich Model

Ulrich's three-legged stool



There are lots of different models which describe how HR service can be delivered. The Ulrich three-legged stool model looks at 3 different types of HR professionals. HR Business partners are the senior HR professionals who work with our business leaders and managers to influence and implement strategic value to the business (CIPD, 2015, p.3). The role of the HR business partner is strategic rather than administrative and therefore requires a different approach and way of thinking, so it is important for a HR business partner to have the necessary skills to be lucrative in the role.

Centres of expertise or excellence are small teams of HR specialists who develop and deliver HR solutions (Wilkinson and Taylor, 2016, p.27). However, with today's technology this has shifted to networks of expertise that share best practice (CIPD, 2015, p.3).

Shared Service centres are large units handling mostly transactional services across a business.

This model will not fit all organisations and fits larger organisations better than small or medium sized ones, you need to assess what the requirement is for your organisation.

# Delivering HR Services

Different arrangements of HR delivery within organisations:

- HR Generalists
- HR Specialists
- Outsourcing
- Shared Services (SSC)
- Consultancy
- Electronic HRM (E-HRM)
- Line managers

HR objectives can be delivered in various different ways, depending on whether an organisation is in the private, public, third sector organisation.

HR Generalists are involved with all aspects of the HR function, they can be a sole practitioner in a small business or a HR Team/department in larger organisations. HR practitioners can also be generalists with a specialist area of expertise, for example: Recruitment, Performance, Employee Engagement and Health and wellbeing, to name a few. Generalists can be useful when there is high demand for a specialism or in a business operating around the clock (eg. NHS).

Outsourcing is the choice to subcontract certain work to external providers (Marchington and Wilkinson, 2012, p.150), rather than dealing with it in house. It was originally used as a way to save money and to also free up time from doing administration work, in order to focus on strategic HR (Spence, 2015, p.20). Popular areas to outsource are payroll, pensions, recruitment or other services such as cleaning as they are often transactional tasks and add little value. Benefits of outsourcing can be cost saving as it can be cheaper than maintaining an in house HR function, also any risks that may be incurred will be deflected to the outsourced company. Organisations which already have adequate resources can still choose to keep services in house rather than outsource.

Shared service centres can be used to provide a corporate service to one large organisation or a few partner organisations (Wilkinson and Taylor, 2016, p.26), like NHS trusts. SSC's were created in line with developing technology to reduce costs, increase quality and organisational change (Taylor and Woodhams, 2016, p.7). Self service SSC's can have a negative impact on individuals who don't have regular access to a computer or have poor IT skills.

Consultancy relates to purchasing the services of a HR consultant who can give specialist advice or work on specific projects or strategy. They are usually hired for a specific period of time, in our organisation we are currently utilising a HR consultant to cover a period of maternity and to lead an important project within our organisation. Regular evaluation of the service should be reviewed to ensure the organisation receives the level of service that was contractually agreed.

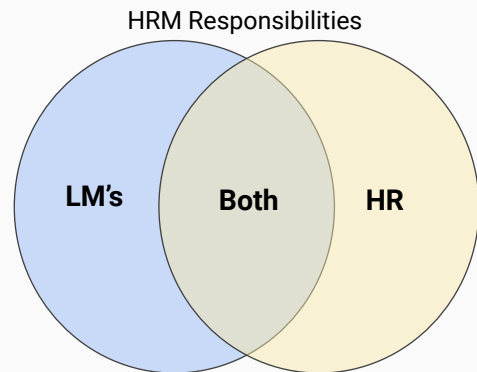
E-HRM or electronic Human Resource Management has been borne out of the technological age. Marler and Parry (2015) define E-HRM as “configurations of computer hardware, software and electronic networking resources that enable.....HRM activities (such as policies, practices and services) by coordinating and controlling individual and group-level data capture and information creation and communication within and across organisational boundaries.” To summarise E-HRM is the link between HRM and IT, in order to create value in an organisation and are often run alongside other delivery methods like SSC's. E-HRM aims to reduce transactional HR admin tasks and improve efficiency. This method can also reduce the HR headcount and so reduce costs, it also offers remote access to HR services which is more and more essential with agile and flexible working arrangements. This also supports communication across the globe for virtual teams and networks (Marchington and Wilkinson, 2012, p.156).

Line Managers have the responsibility of managing their team and as they have regular contact with their employees, so it is important that they work with HR to manage people issues effectively and consistently (Wilkinson and Taylor, 2016, p.26). A close relationship with managers can mean HR has more time to dedicate to strategies and projects. A downside can be line managers who are incompetent or are unwilling to follow HR procedures correctly.

# Delivering HR Services- Working with LM's

## Working with Line Managers

- Selection, appraisal & training
- Business partnering
- Policy & procedures
- HR Support & advice



In small organisations there is a huge focus on line managers to deliver and support HRM, as they consistently have a key people management role (Marchington and Wilkinson, 2012, p. 167). It is imperative for HR to develop strong relationships with line managers, particularly in smaller organisations. Often responsibilities can be shared between HR and line managers, including performance reviews, recruitment and maintaining employee records. In our business the HR initiative and implementation of the cloud based technology, PeopleHR, meant that our line managers could manage their 'people admin' more efficiently and effectively. In order to devolve more HRM responsibilities to line managers HR can look to build line manager capabilities through training, workshops and working 1:1 with line managers to build confidence and competency. Having open communication and building a positive reputation will nurture an environment where line managers rely on HR only for advice and direct support.

# Change management

# Change Management

Change is inevitable and also a requirement if we wish to grow and develop in today's world.

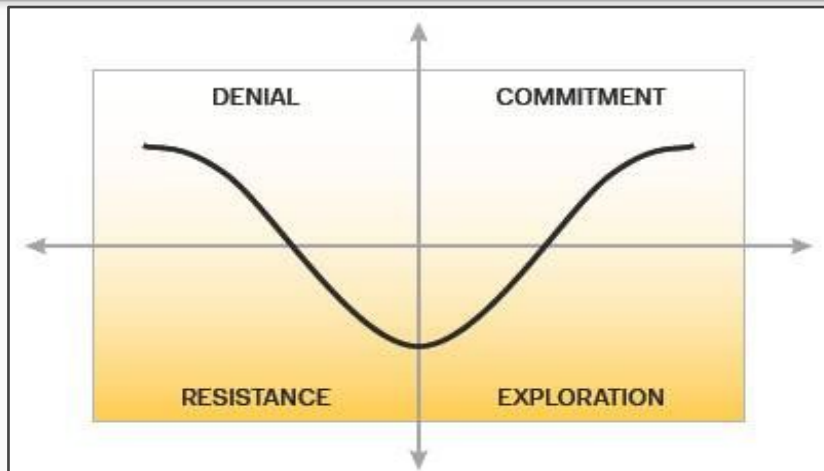
Effective change management is vital and HR play a big part in making change successful. We need to consider both the controllable and the uncontrollable:

- Controllable- The Processes
- Uncontrollable- The People

Change is inevitable, with change brings the new, the unknown and it can feel threatening to some (Carter and Varney, 2018, p.3). We need to remain competitive and to move and change with the times to ensure our survival.

Effective change management is vital and HR plays a big part in making change successful. This can be broken down into two parts; the controllable and the uncontrollable. The controllable includes HR being involved in the initial stages and advising leaders on the available skills in the organisation; assessing impact on areas of the business; balancing the interests and concerns of stakeholders; anticipating any issues or problems; addressing the correct means of communication to address affected parties (for example, we wouldn't phone every single person in the retail team as it would be far too time consuming for everyone involved) and finally evaluating and reporting on the impact of change (Wilkinson and Taylor, 2016, p.32). People and their reaction to change is seen as the uncontrollable, however HR can help to manage this. Individuals have unique personalities and can react to change differently to others. This can be influenced by previous experiences to change and where they stand in relation to the change, i.e. their position in the business and whether the change affects them, or not, and whether in a positive or negative way.

# Change Management- DREC Model



Individuals can go through a range of emotions when confronted with change. The DREC model, adapted from the Kübler-Ross '5 stages of grief Model' (Kew and Stredwick, 2016, p.81) effectively describes the stages individuals can progress through:

1. Denial- The first reaction can be an emotional one and some individuals will be in denial of the change or proposed change happening around them.
2. Resistance- At this second stage some may begin to resist the change or can be seen to passively resist or become obstructive.
3. Exploration/ Experimentation- Here individuals start to think about the change, form questions and build on the concept of change.
4. Commitment- The final stage where individuals are in acceptance and on board with the change.

Individuals cannot be hurried through this cycle, it takes time. If undue pressure is put on individuals to change too quickly it can cause them to revert back to earlier stages (Kew and Stredwick, 2016, p.81).

# Change Management

## How can HR contribute to Change Management?

- Culture of Change
- Effective Communication
  - Top down
  - Bottom up
  - Two way
- Learning & Development
- Share Success

In order for HR to positively facilitate effective change we can encourage and foster an organisational culture that embraces change and also encourages employee engagement. Thoroughly planning for change and involving individuals in said planning can help. We can also ensure that all communication is appropriate and with the audience in mind. It's important to have an open dialogue to communicate purpose, goals and benefits, but also to review any potential issues. This will help manage expectations and effectively deal with any conflict that may arise (Wilkinson and Taylor, 2016, p.33). There are different methods of communication that can be considered, these include:

Top down- Communication travels down from senior managers. This should be done by speaking directly to employees and can be done in physical team meeting(s) or with managers visiting multiple sites. Regular updates should also be communicated across all available mediums (eg. Intranet, notice boards, email, etc) to ensure as many people are reached as possible.

Bottom up - This gives employees the opportunity to take part in talks and put forward ideas. This can be done through workshops or forums.

Two way- This refers to one to one consultation meetings with employees and their line manager or HR. Two way discussions gives the employee an opportunity to talk about their personal circumstances and how any change may affect them (Wilkinson and Taylor, 2016, p.33).

HRD interventions such as training and development can augment employees responsiveness and ability to adapt to change (Wilkinson and Taylor, 2016, p.35). With the support of line managers employees can be mentored and or coached to

assist with the acceptance of change. Post-change it is essential to celebrate successful change endeavours by communicating any successes in relation to organisational performance as well as individual success stories. Shouting about successes will help embed a positive change ready culture for the future (Wilkinson and Taylor, 2016, p.35).

Ethical HR

# Ethical HR

## What are Ethics?

'Ethics provide the moral compass by which we live our lives and make decisions: 'doing the right thing' because it's the right thing to do, not because of personal or financial gain. ' (CIPD, 2019)

## What is Ethical Practice?

'Ethical practice is the application of ethical values in organisational behaviour. It applies in all aspects of organisational conduct, including corporate governance, employment practices, sales techniques, stakeholder relations, accounting practices, and issues of product and corporate responsibility.' (CIPD, 2019)

'Ethics provide the moral compass by which we live our lives and make decisions, 'doing the right thing' because it's the right thing to do, not because of personal or financial gain' (CIPD, 2019).

Armstrong (2016) states that 'Professional ethics are the moral principles and values governing professional behaviour which may or may not be enshrined in codes of practice.'

# Ethical HR- CIPD Viewpoint

## The CIPD code of conduct

Ethical Standards and Integrity Members of the CIPD shall:

- 2.1 establish, maintain and develop business relationships based on confidence, trust and respect
- 2.2 exhibit and role model professional and personal integrity and honesty at all times
- 2.3 demonstrate and promote sensitivity for the customs, practices, culture and personal beliefs of others
- 2.4 champion employment and business practices that promote equality of opportunity, diversity and inclusion and support human rights and dignity
- 2.5 safeguard all confidential, commercially sensitive and personal data acquired as a result of business relationships and not use it for personal advantage or the benefit or detriment of third parties. (CIPD, 2020)

The CIPD, like most organisations, has a code of conduct that members must adhere to. The code of conduct is made up of four parts, with part 2 focusing on Ethical Standards and Integrity.

# Ethical HR- CIPD Ethical Lenses

## CIPD Eight Ethical lenses

- ❖ Fairness
- ❖ Merit
- ❖ Markets
- ❖ Democracy
- ❖ Well-being
- ❖ Rights & Duties
- ❖ Character
- ❖ Handing down

### Fairness

*Everyone in an organisation should be able to agree to it, whatever their place in it.*

### Merit

*Jobs and their rewards should track talent and hard work.*

### Markets

*Jobs and their rewards should follow from voluntary market exchanges.*

### Democracy

*No one should be subject to a regime in which they have no say.*

### Well-being

*Work should be good for us.*

### Rights and Duties

*Everyone has rights to do some things and to be free of some things, and everyone has duties not to violate others' rights.*

### Character

*Each of us should work to develop the best ethical character for our roles.*

### Handing Down

*We can't reinvent or master the world, and are instead responsible for conserving and maintaining the small part of it over which we currently have stewardship, and for passing it on undamaged to our descendants.*

In 2015 the CIPD released a report outlining 8 ethical lenses in order for professionals to see and re-imagine ethical predicaments in the workplace (CIPD, 2015, p.3). The different lenses can work exclusively but some may support others.

# Ethical HR- A business case

## Benefits of good Ethical Practice

- An open culture improves morale
- Good relations with customers lead to an enhanced reputation.
- Ethical companies outperform their peers financially in the long term.

(CIPD, 2019)

## Risks of Bad ethical practice:

- Damage to reputation/brand
- Risk of lawsuits
- Financial risks
- Not as successful as competitors

The requirement for HR to take account of the dignity and rights of employees when making employment decisions is imperative. Monitoring fairness, equity and consistency in the management of our people and to ensure individuals are treated with respect and consideration (Armstrong, 2016).

Ethics and compliance need to be applied to all HR areas, such as recruitment, performance evaluation, and rewards. There is a strong business case to be made to sustain and promote ethical organisational culture and practice. An open ethical culture can improve morale, making for productive employees and reducing staff turnover. Good relations with customers can enhance reputation and brand power. Customers that trust a brand will be loyal to said brand and can become a lifelong customer, which benefits business in the long run. A good reputation can also result in individuals wanting to work with your organisation, therefore recruitment can become more effective through referrals. Finally, companies that invest in ethical standards outperform their competitors financially in the long term.

We need to ensure that our organisation is acting ethically, for example, in the case of fair dealing in terms of pay, staff need to be paid the same for performing the same role, despite their gender. Unethical practice has seen companies breaching the Equality Act 2010 by paying men more than women. Back in 2018 the charity Oxfam hit the headlines with sexual misconduct claims whilst providing aid to earthquake victims in Haiti. Claims went back to 2011 which lead to staff being dismissed and claims that Oxfam covered up the scandal. As well as being in breach of internal policies the staff had a duty of care and breached The Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006. This unethical behaviour of both Oxfam and the staff in question caused serious damage to the Oxfam brand and cost them millions in forfeited

government funding.

# Evaluating HR

# Evaluating HR

## How can the HR contribution be evaluated?

- 1. Board Membership/Influence on Strategy (Board of directors)
- 2. Views of Key Stakeholders (Senior managers; Line Managers & employees)
- 3. Benchmarking against External Comparisons
- 4. Service Level Agreements (SLA's)

Tools: HR metrics; KPI's; Balanced Scorecard

The HR function needs to be adding value to an organisation, therefore HR activities need to be evaluated in order to prove value-added. It can be difficult to quantify the HR contribution as we rely on managers to put projects and policies into place (Marchington and Wilkinson, 2012, p.167). One method of evaluation is for HR to have a presence on the board of directors, as they will have an influence on strategy and can ensure certain HR issues are taken seriously (Marchington and Wilkinson, 2012, p.159).

An effective way to evaluate HR is to gain the views of key stakeholders or key customers- the main people that require a service from the HR function. Methods such as surveys or focus groups could be used to gauge opinion on the value of HR practices and/or the HR function in general.

Other methods can include HR metrics; KPIs; SLA's and balanced scorecards. HR metrics refer to the numbers or statistics, in recruitment activities metrics such as number of applications, staff turnover and recruitment spend data can be analysed and used to benchmark internally and/or externally (Wilkinson and Taylor, 2016, p.30). Key Performance Indicators (KPI's) are a measurable value applied to a business objective in order to establish how effectively an organisation is meeting the objective. In our business, KPI's are applied to many objectives, like ATV (average transaction value) and loyalty card sign up.

Service level agreements (SLA's) look at evaluating internal activities against specific agreed criteria or timescales. They can be applied to functions such as recruitment, payroll, etc.

A balanced scorecard is a document of tables that lists performance measures with a strategy map in order to display how they are linked with organisational strategy

(Wilkinson and Taylor, 2016, p.30).

# Evaluating HR- positive organisational outcomes

## Huselid (1995)

- + Groundbreaking for the time
- + Large broad sample
- + Qualitative and Quantitative data
- Low response rate (28%)



An early cross-sectional study into the links between high performance work practices and company performance was conducted by Mark Huselid in 1995. He sent out detailed questionnaires to a broad sample of almost 1,000 American companies who all had over 100 employees which yielded both qualitative and quantitative data. Dividing practices into skills/organisational structures and employee motivation methods designed to recognise and reinforce positive employee behaviors (Huselid, 1995, p.645, 647). Huselid compared results such as employee turnover and gross rates of return of investment, with the company reports as published in annual reports. He found that the more an organisation used sophisticated HR practices it lead to lower staff turnover, increased productivity and a higher market value and profits (Taylor and Woodhams, 2016, p.200). Specific findings in relation to an increase in HR practice were:

- 7.05% decrease in staff turnover
- \$27,044 increase in sales per employee
- \$3,814 more profit per employee (Taylor and Woodhams, 2016, p.201)

Limitations to Huselid's work include an overall low response rate (28%). This study is also very outdated but it was such a landmark piece of research that others have replicated the study in their own ways.

# Evaluating HR- positive organisational outcomes

## Purcell et al (2003)

- + Qualitative and Quantitative data
  - + Interviews
  - + Questionnaires
- Inconsistent re-interviewing
- Took 6 years to complete



Another study undertaken at the University of Bath conducted the study within the AMO framework. AMO refers to Ability, motivation and opportunity in relation to performance. People perform better when they have the relevant skills, knowledge, motivation and are given the opportunity to use their skills to benefit their organisation (Purcell et al, 2003). The lengthy study was produced for the CIPD in order to prove the impact of HR practice and overall business performance. Key concepts including integrating business and HR strategy; the role of line managers; performance and HR policy were investigated.

Twelve organisations renowned for their reputable HRM took part in the study. Front line employees took part in comprehensive interviews (twice) over 2.5 years so any change in attitudes could be reviewed. This coupled with interviews from managers and data on HR policy and performance measures were analysed. The research yielded both qualitative and quantitative data. Questionnaires and face to face interviews were used to provide evaluation of HR practices. Having a broad sample of employees meant that the research could review differences between policy and the implementation of policy (Purcell et al, 2003). The questionnaires contained control questions taken from the Workplace Employee Relations Survey (WERS 1998) in order to benchmark and make comparisons. The qualitative data provided from the face to face interviews allowed researchers to probe answers to gain a better understanding. Limitations include the inability to always re-interview the same staff in the second year due to leavers, absence and shift patterns.

Findings from one of the organisations that took part, Nationwide Building Society, outlined how effective integrating business and HR strategy was essential to sales performance and linked to employee motivation and job satisfaction. In the case of Tesco, strong links between job satisfaction and respect shown by immediate line

managers, and HR practice and policy were drawn.

# Conclusion

HRM holds the key to the success of organisations realising their strategic objectives. There is no 'best fit' model for HR strategy and so must be tailored to organisational needs. HRM is evolving, we need to look to future proof our organisations through the use of technology and being insight driven and agile so we can effectively adapt to change. The importance of line managers in supporting and delivering HRM should also not be overlooked. Ethics need to always be considered in all HR and organisational decision making in order to maintain corporate responsibility, the dignity of our employees and reduce risk to the business. We also need to continue to evaluate the HR function to ensure it continually seeks improvement and adds value to organisations.

# Thank you!

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