



HR

PROFESSIONAL

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Summary:

Introduction.....3

Activity 1.....4

Activity 2.....5

Activity 3.....6

Activity 4.....7

Bibliography.....8

Introduction:

Human resources according to BusinessDictionary is “The division of a company that is focused on activities relating to employees. These activities normally include recruiting and hiring of new employees, orientation and training of current employees, employee benefits, and retention.”

Human resource management is associate to the development and the implementation of programs and processes designed to increase effectiveness, communication and productivity within organization. HR management is a contemporary vision of the organization since the term human resources was linked to the value of labor in 1960. Nowadays HR take a very important place on company's performances. In fact companies are mainly run by people so the employee involvement and quality is essential, HR managers make sure to keep their people on top.

In this piece of work we will cover 4 activities that includes the signification of being an HR professional, group dynamics processes, conflict resolution methods, problem solving techniques, negotiation and a focus on personal development plan.

Activity 1: What it means to be an HR professional?

As defined by David Goss in 1996 a human resources manager is “a diverse body of thought and practice, loosely unified by a concern to integrate the management of personnel more closely with the core management activity of organisations.” (Introduction to human resource management, P79).

According to the CIPD the core elements of a HR manager professionalism is “social and ethical responsibility, body of knowledge and skills, situational judgment, commitment, continuing professional development and identity” (CIPD HR professionalism, 2017). These are the 6 key areas that makes a good HR manager.

HR people have generally a specific characteristic which is a growth mindset. Carol Dweck, teacher at Stanford University, coined the terms fixed mindset and growth mindset to describe the underlying beliefs people have about learning and intelligence. In fact, people with a fixed mindset want to look smart and avoid challenges, obstacles, criticism and the success of others whereas growth mindset people leads to a desire to learn and therefore persist, embrace and overcome. HR professionals are working in a changing environment therefore they have to keep a high level of skill, knowledge and abilities. That growth mindset that they have help them with their CPD and to achieve the challenges they are confronting within the company.

The ethical aspect of HR is also very important. “Ethical theory provides a system of rules or principles that guide us in making decisions about what is right or wrong and good or bad in a particular situation.” (Northhouse, 2016 p330) Ethical issues and exposition to public is a huge problem for companies, the public care a lot about non ethics events within an organisation (Example: 5% sales worldwide for Volkswagen after the scandal). In fact, HR people are in charge of ethical aspects like the nurture of an ethical organisation culture, the recruitment of ethical people, the resolution of ethical conflicts and dealing with the aftermath of the conflict.

In term of management and leadership there is the hard and the soft HR management which are two completely different way to manage people:

Hard HRM: “The primacy of business needs means that human resources will be acquired, deployed and dispensed with as corporate plans demand” (Introduction to human resource management p31). Employee are treated like machinery and buildings and can be fired at any time. This is a very American style of management.

Soft HRM: “Treats employees as the most important resource in the business and a source of competitive advantage. Employees are treated as individuals and their needs are planned accordingly” (Tutor2u). Using this management process, HRM focus on the needs of employees to motivate them and reach their full potential.

There is three level of HR responsibilities: Senior HR managers, Middle-level HR managers and specialists, HR officers and administrators. Each of them have different specialism and responsibility due to their skill difference. Senior management makes decision and strategy,

Middle-level HRM handle recruitment, rewarding, relations, employee L&D and HR officers and administrators take care of systems, procedures, data and records.

HR professional have many behaviours and knowledge. The 6 areas of knowledge detected by CIPD are business acumen, analytics and creating value, digital working, change, people practice, culture and behaviour. Furthermore the 8 core behaviours mentioned by CIPD are ethical practice, professional courage and influence, valuing people, working inclusively, commercial drive, passion for learning, insights focused, and situational decision-making. In fact HR people must be very complete and should have a lot of assets allowing them to do the job.

“What managers do is a matter of considerable uncertainty, in spite of great deal of research... Manager’s job is characterized by a considerable fragmentation of varied brief activities, with frequent interruptions.” (Managing people Third edition, p2). Indeed HR is a very human job that takes verbal conversation and good communication. People that work in HR are socially intelligent and know how to deal with different types of people, there is also psychological aspect that they are able to manage and use.

Activity 2: Group dynamics and conflict resolution methods

According to David Horton Smith, “a group is the largest set of two or more individuals who are jointly characterised by a network of relevant communications, a shared sense of collective identity and one or more shared dispositions with associated normative strength”. (Organisational Behaviour N.K Jain, p215)

Groups generally have a common goal or interest that they share, they interact within each other to accomplish their objectives. The different phase of the creation and the life cycle of a group is undertaken by the psychologist Bruce Tuckman in his article “Developmental sequence in small groups” in 1965. Tuckman describe the path that a large number of groups follow on their way to success. This path is composed of 5 phases: forming, storming, norming, performing, adjourning. The achievement of those phases ensure trust, motivation and strengthen the group.

They are aware of one another, they trust the group and feel part of it. There is a lot of unintentional effect and think behind groups such as the notion of groupthink. Groupthink was defined by Irving Janis in his book “groupthink” as “a mode of thinking that people engage in when they are deeply involved in a cohesive in-group”. This effect of the group is due to the high level of motivation of the group members who see the others groups as threats and are convinced that they will always be right. This notion of groupthink was illustrated in the film “The Wave” (2008) in which a teacher transform his class into a mini-dictatorship using group dynamic and groupthink.

Every group or team member is raised differently, they have different backgrounds, personalities, moral, and ethical beliefs, and this differences can lead to conflicts. Group’s

conflicts must be resolved through swift and thorough resolution techniques. Otherwise the conflict can drive the team to breakdown. Common factors of the conflicts genesis are different values, needs, attitude, expectations, personalities, resources, perceptions.

Conflicts resolution techniques are not certificated methods that are efficient in every circumstance. Those techniques, developed by HR people, are made of good sense, great communication and relationship skills. The main tools to resolve conflict are self-awareness, managing emotions and being able to reflect. Communication and listening is also key to conflict resolution. Ensuring accountability is essential, HR managers are not the only one that take care of conflicts but all the employees involved in. Never ignore the conflict, seek the conflict is important to find the root of the conflict. In companies, there is a lot of conflicts between managers and employees who feel bullied and not treated well by their managers. This can create clashes and interpersonal conflicts that can affect the company atmosphere. HR people that have to handle those conflicts have to stay very fair, listen to the perspective of each individuals and avoid the idea that managers are always right. If the conflict does not lead to a real solution the HR will generally place the employee under the supervision of another manager. This type of problem solving involve a lot skills and assets from HRs such as assertiveness, listening, mediation, fairness. Using another example with performance reviews conflicts, HR demonstrate empathy and coaching skills. In this case HR have to work with the employee to find a way to improve his performance through listening, helping, motivating, planning and setting new goals.

Activity 3: Project management, problem solving and negotiation

The project involved was held one year ago and was the completion project of a two years study path. The purpose of this project is creating a business start-up which is offering an innovative single product for sale. The project initiator is a food industry engineer student which undertook a team of 5 business students including me to develop a business and marketing plan for the project. The product she created is an oil based on edible seaweed. Our work was to do a market study, a marketing plan, define a legal and tax status and a financial analysis of the company.

This project is linked to a complicated problem because it is a matter of good practice and skills that we had to use in order to achieve the goal. We were tightly coupled as a team and with the project holder also we were directed and had governing constraints.

During the project we went through 3 of the 5 steps of the design thinking process:

Empathize: We had to converse and communicate a lot with the project holder to understand what her goal was, what she needed from us and what her expectations were. We engaged with a lot of people from this specific area (oil and seaweed experts) such as supermarkets directors and seaweed companies.

Define: With all the information we collected we were able to define the problem, target the work that we could easily did and the work that needed more knowledge and accuracy.

Ideate: In this step we were partly thinking outside the box to bring some of our ideas on the table. In fact, we were strictly narrowed so we did not have that much freedom for creative ideas. Brainstorming was used often, we were sitting around the table and talking every week.

The product was already created so they were no prototype step. Furthermore, we weren't able to come along the test step because the project has not been completed due to a lack of funding from the project holder.

In order to achieve the project we tried to manage the team as best as we could. We had a group communication and a meeting that was held every week to talk about the progress and the new ideas. We were giving feedbacks regarding the work of everyone and were helping each other's improving our performances. Each member had a role and had to stick to it, everyone was supposed to have a meaningful voice. In fact we had some issues with egos so we decided to have an open talk with the two individuals who were always arguing. We were able to disable the problem being fair and not taking part, letting them having a conversation about what is wrong and find a solution by switching roles.

As a project leader I had to show involvement in the project to motivate the other members. Thanks to my relationship skills I was able to get the best out of each teammate. I have an assertive type of influence but I'm open to debate and other ideas. I was comfortable meeting and dealing with stakeholders when my teammates were more into doing the thorough work. I was holding every relationship events involved within the project. Thanks to that I was able to impose myself in regard to the team and the external stakeholders. In term of negotiating with the stakeholders like distributors and wholesalers I was adopting a very relaxed, friendly but professional behaviour. I was also putting forward my knowledge of the industry thanks to my international internships and my parents backgrounds in the industry.

Activity 4: Self-assessment on one development need and solution

I'm interesting in doing a career in the sector of the mass distribution. This is due to my parents' background. Since they are both working in this field I'm familiar with it and I find it very interesting. I did two very interesting internship in the sector as a marketing researcher officer and an assistant of the international distribution department of a multinational company. I also did a seasonal job as a merchandiser and all this good experiences have reinforce my attraction to the sector. The experiences and the path of my studies taught me some basic knowledge about the field. However I still need to improve this knowledge if I want to improve my expertise and my value to the company as a young job seeker after my studies. In sum, I need to work on core knowledge and target the improvement of my business acumen. Referring to the CIPD new professional map a business acumen is "Understanding your organisation, the commercial context and the wider world of work". So one of my professional development path is developing my business acumen, my knowledge and my expertise in the sector of mass distribution (supermarket, hypermarket, all type of distribution...) in order to upgrade my employment value. To achieve this goal I need to get more involved in this world. The first objective is to attend to events related to the sector such as the trade fair for the retail sector and the job fair distribution event in November 2019 in

Paris. This type of events are very reliable because they help with networking and find out about the sector and the jobs needed. As I am aiming to do a business school next year I have to do a master related to mass distribution. The school that I am aiming to do offer master on strategic distribution and retail management. I absolutely need to register myself in this type of masters in order to become more knowledgeable in the sector. Many other resources are available like inspiring speeches by Joseph Pine on the customers' vision (ted talks) and also lots of books on the grocery evolution and warehouse (warehouse management, Gwynne Richards).

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