

Qualification: CIPD Diploma in Applied Human Resources

Module Name: Understanding Resourcing & Talent Planning
(Unit 5KRTP)

Assessment Activity

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Student Name: Leanne Aitken

Student Number: 53274276

CIPD Membership Number: 1810266

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Signed: 

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1.1 Describe the key contemporary labour market trends

Prior to the Coronavirus pandemic and as recently as December 2019, the UK was experiencing record highs in employment rates with 76.5% of the eligible population in work, whilst enjoying a low level of unemployment amongst the economically active population, as evidenced by the 3.8% figure published as part of the labour market overview (February 2020) when compared to 4% in the prior year (ONS, 2020a).

This data set was further bolstered by record lows in the economic inactivity rate (20.5%) and a vacancy level of 810,00, which was 50,000 less than the previous year. Of these, 137,000 were within the human health and social work activities sector (making it the largest sector for the 8th consecutive period, accounting for 16.9% of total vacancies) with the largest fall in vacancies being reflected in the manufacturing and information & communication sectors which saw a reduction of 10,000 vacancies from the prior year (ONS, 2020b).

Upon closer inspection of the factors driving the high levels of employment, the above overview highlighted that women in employment had increased to 72.4% (one percentage point higher than the previous year), which was deemed to be due, in part, to the equalisation of the state pension age which saw fewer women retiring between the ages of 60 and 65.

It should also be noted that the above increases took place against relatively flat increases in total pay, which only realised a growth rate of 1.4% annually.

Conversely, the landscape in labour trends in South Africa paints a very different picture for the same period, which culminated in Moody's downgrading of the country's sovereign credit rating to "junk" status on 27 March 2020 as a result of the continuing decline in fiscal strength and weak growth (Reuters, 2020).

According to Stats SA (2020), employment was slightly up year on year, by 0.2% largely attributable to growth in community and business services which translated into 45,000 more jobs being created in the 3 months to December 2019, bringing the total number of employed to 16.4 million.

This is, however, no cause for optimism given that unemployment remains amongst the highest levels experienced in eleven years at 29.1%, primarily as a result of the trade and manufacturing industries shedding jobs.

Whilst there have been gains in the working-age population which increased by 145,000 for the fourth quarter to December 2019, this figure is negatively impacted by the number of economically inactive people in the labour market which increased to 107,000 for the same period. Community and social services saw the biggest upsurge in filling vacancies which, unlike the UK, filled 113,000 of available jobs, followed by finance and transport.

In terms of upside, the formal sector recorded the most significant increase in employment figures by absorbing 117,000 people into roles during this quarter, followed by agriculture with 6,000 jobs.

Whilst the description of a sector being described as “formal” appears strange when viewed through the lens of the UK labour market, this term speaks to the polarity in the labour market like so much else related to the economic and social landscape in the country. There is a vast unskilled and semi-skilled population who are reliant on the “informal” sector for work (including domestic, gardening, fuel-pump attendants etc). This sector saw a decline of 77,000 jobs in the period under review.

A further depressing statistic is that of the demographic for those aged 15 to 24, 32% (or 3.3 million) are not in employment, education or training (IOL, 2020).

1.2 *Describe the principles of effective workforce planning and the tools to carry it out*

According to the CIPD (2020), effective workforce planning comprises of a process whereby the current workforce is analysed, future workforce needs are determined and the gap between present and future business needs identified, following which, solutions are implemented in order to facilitate the accomplishment of an organisation’s mission, goals and strategic plan.

In order to ensure that organisations have the right people in post at the right time and with the right skills, there are a number of factors that require consideration, namely:

- Generating information that when analysed, should inform how best to address demand and supply currently, as well as identifying future needs by informing a set of actions. According to the CIPD (2020), this falls into “hard” and “soft” workforce planning, whereby, the former is concerned with the numbers of people (and requisite skills) required, whilst the latter focuses on devising a strategic framework to provide the context within which information can be considered.
- Organisations should engage in workforce planning in tandem with business planning and incorporate line managers and other stakeholders that hold the knowledge of how the day-to-day work is conducted and assign accountability to a workforce task team to manage / guide the workforce planning process (Tucker, 2019).
- To devise an action plan that facilitates flexibility (both contractual and functional), thereby enabling a change-ready workforce who can proactively respond to fluid business needs and developments.
- Finally, any action plans would require ongoing monitoring and evaluation which, when adopting a contemporary view of workforce planning, should be subject to a minimum of quarterly reviews on an annual basis to enable any adjustment and allow for demonstrable return on investment to senior stakeholders (Tucker, 2019).

In terms of the enacting workforce planning, Taylor & Woodhams (2016) list 4 stages of the process, as follows:

- Forecasting demand – considering the environment that the organisation operates in, against the backdrop of the existing structures and processes and whether these are set to change (eg: is there an impending move towards automating processes). A PESTLE analysis is one of the best ways of gaining insight into the external factors impacting an organisation especially in periods of extreme change - navigating Brexit for example (CIPD, 2019b).
- Forecasting supply – a fundamental requirement is to gain a sound understanding of the labour market and whether the organisation

is operating in a tight or loose market, as that will inform where the focus should be in terms of initiatives to retain talent amongst the incumbent workforce whilst positioning the organisation to successfully attract external hires.

- Identifying gaps: This stage speaks to the need for reviewing the skills, capabilities and knowledge of the existing workforce with a view to ascertaining how the gaps can be plugged in order to future proof the organisation (tools that can be utilised here, included devising competency frameworks, training needs analyses and performing skills audits).
- Addressing gaps: Internal development initiatives can be implemented (eg: re-training, introducing flexible working schemes, coaching & mentoring initiatives), whilst considering how best to access resources externally (ie: talent attraction campaigns, outsourcing or entering into fixed-term contracts with those working within the “gig” economy).

1.3 Explain how to develop basic people plans and succession plans

Much of the current literature in respect of the elements that constitute effective workforce planning make reference to the importance of not being too prescriptive about the process, but rather, to talk to managers about where they’re at currently, what resourcing constraints they are facing and then engage in some scenario planning in order to determine what actions are needed to respond to unfolding events (CIPD 2018; Tucker 2019) with the ultimate aim of improving organisational performance and reducing business risk by shrinking the gap between the people the organisation actually has and the people it needs, to deliver on its objectives.

According to the CIPD (2018), developing a workforce or people plan is multi-faceted and brings together a number of requirements under one framework, including:

- The clarification of roles and responsibilities between line managers and HR as well as determining whether the plan is to be managed centrally or at a local level.
- Clear and consistent, good quality data which can include: attrition rates, historical trends, budget forecasts. This should then be

utilised to provide management insights and inform business decisions.

- Ensuring that the plan translates into practical actions in the recruitment, development and deployment of people.
- Assessing the skills as well as the number of people required to service business need currently and going forward, which would enable the identification of current and future skills gaps.
- Devising plans for different purposes, across varying timeframes depending on whether the organisation requires short-term deployment or longer term workforce planning initiatives.
- Developing skills amongst the incumbent workforce to improve resilience and flexibility in order to mitigate the risk of having to source externally in a tight labour market.
- Focusing on the greatest resourcing risks which usually entail the roles that are difficult to recruit for or require lengthy training.
- Linking in with the above point is the need for robust succession planning which should include consideration being given to how a role can be fulfilled effectively in the event that a post holder exits the organisation or accepts another role internally (CIPD, 2020b). There are a number of considerations that factor into formulating succession plans, some of which are outlined below:
 - Adopting an inclusive whole workforce approach by devising succession plans that recognise the diversity of talents within an organisation and tailoring development opportunities accordingly, whilst balancing the work-life needs of individuals can significantly increase the available talent pool.
 - Future leaders can be developed through a variety of means including leadership and management programmes, secondments, side-ways moves, coaching & mentoring initiatives etc, however, the CIPD (2020b) makes the point that a succession plan needs to be implemented in a fair and transparent manner whilst being aligned to organisational processes and the organisational culture if it is to succeed.
 - The plan should factor in considerations for managing work reduction as well as growth and how to retain the intellectual capital of an ageing workforce for example (whilst navigating

any potential legal challenge on the grounds of discrimination), where flexible working and job rotation schemes could be utilised to enable more junior employees to step up (Secker, 2020).

2.1 *Assess the strengths and weaknesses of different approaches to attracting talent to the organisation*

There are a number of approaches that organisations can use to attract talent to their organisation, however, prior to determining where to focus the resources of the organisation, it is vital to tailor an approach based on a thorough understanding of the talent pool from which candidates are being sourced. There are a number of specialist resources that can be called upon to conduct this exercise, for example, Experian offer a mosaic profiling assessment which maps the geographical sites of an organisation to the demographic within those areas.

According to a survey of over 1,000 HR professionals across the UK undertaken by the CIPD (2017), organisations reported an increasing reliance on the use of technology to develop their recruitment channels, with the most effective channels being deemed as corporate websites, professional networking sites and commercial job sites. Further, as competition for talent increases, employers are incentivised to leverage these recruitment channels in their quest to differentiate themselves as an employer of choice (McCartney, 2017).

An overview of the strengths and weaknesses of a couple of these approaches is outlined below:

<i>Corporate Websites / Professional Networking Sites / Job Boards</i>	
<i>Strengths</i>	<i>Weaknesses</i>
A website provides a platform within which the ethos, mission statement and values of an organisation can be showcased and linked to the application process.	Linking recruitment applications to a corporate website that either doesn't effectively support a streamlined application process can result in candidates de-selecting at that point.
Utilising networking sites like LinkedIn enables recruiters to match roles to the specialist knowledge and skillsets of individual profiles.	Once a profile is uploaded onto a networking site, it opens the door to unwelcome approaches from recruitment agencies and marketing firms.
Job boards like Indeed accommodates "one-click" applications which holds broad appeal for those wanting to apply for multiple roles quickly.	The drawback is that applicants aren't intentional in their application to an organisation and aren't invested in securing that particular role resulting in them potentially de-selecting at a later point.

<i>Internal Training / Development Initiatives</i>	
<i>Strengths</i>	<i>Weaknesses</i>
Developing employees internally supports succession planning and boosts retention (CIPD, 2019d).	According to CIPD research, 3 out of 10 employers only made career enhancement opportunities to those who were deemed to add value to the organisation (hard-to-replace skills, degree-level qualifications) which calls long-term sustainability into question (CIPD, 2019f).
Providing opportunities for people at every level to improve their employability can serve to demonstrate authentic commitment to an organisation's values and mission statement.	Selection criteria for training and development is frequently ill-defined and lacking in fairness and transparency, which impacts moral and can damage the brand.
Utilising internal training and development to support clear career pathways can be an integral part of the EVP which can be profiled through recruitment campaigns and holds significant appeal for Gen-X and Gen-Y applicants (Ng, Lyon & Schweitzer, 2018).	Measuring and evaluating return on investment for learning & development programmes is a common failing amongst organisations and as such, can prove an ineffective and costly undertaking (Forbes, 2017).

2.2 Assess the strengths and weaknesses of different approaches to retaining talent

As previously noted in point 2.1, business leaders should ensure that they hold a solid foundational understanding prior to adopting or devising an approach to address an issue, in this case, retention. According to Thomas & Hatcher (2018), organisations should engage its workforce prior to implementing any retention strategy, if it is to be effective, for example, conducting a review of the benefits scheme with a view to increasing flexible benefits would be a wasted endeavour if incumbent employees and exit interview results pointed towards the primary reason for employee discontent and the resultant increase in dysfunctional turnover being as a result of poor leadership and management.

Another pivotal factor when seeking to retain talent is the culture within the organisation which, according to Lindor (2018), is a key contributor to high performing employees leaving an organisation, despite them being in a good job that fulfils a number of other criteria (ie: the ability to work autonomously, integrated work-life balance, good job satisfaction etc).

Two of the approaches that could be considered as a means to enhance the employer value proposition ("EVP") and improve retention are outlined below:

<i>Introduce initiatives to improve leadership & management</i>	
<i>Strengths</i>	<i>Weaknesses</i>
Equipping line managers with the skills to become effective people managers should correlate into increased productivity.	Failure to consider how these skills would be impacted by the different environments / functions within which managers operate across the organisation could result in inconsistent practice.
Creating a mindset of accountability amongst line managers to navigate their teams through the day-to-day issues of absence management and conduct will improve the capacity of the HR function to dedicate to strategic projects.	An absence of multi-dimensional support for managers upon completion of training could result in them being disengaged in the process.
This initiative could be utilised to track performance at lower levels of the organisation through the use of competency frameworks (identifying differential performance and rewarding that with an opportunity to form part of a leadership stream).	Increasing the training and diversity of exposure to different areas of the business would ultimately serve to make managers more marketable and potentially more confident in seeking external opportunities.

<i>Segmentation of Reward & Recognition Schemes (CIPD, 2019e)</i>	
<i>Strengths</i>	<i>Weaknesses</i>
Adopting a tailored approach to reward in order to better align to the interests and needs of different areas of the workforce should translate into higher levels of job satisfaction and engagement.	There is a risk that employees at different levels of the business feel aggrieved that they aren't eligible to receive the same benefit which could result in higher attrition rates amongst that group.
Introducing variable pay and flexible benefits could serve an incentivisation to meet stretched targets within sales / call centre environments.	The organisation's systems and structures would need to support such a scheme (eg. if the payroll department lack the capacity to administer varying rates of pay), this would be unsustainable.

3.1 Explain key aspects of good practice in relation to the development of job descriptions, person specifications and competency frameworks.

According to the the Equality Act 2010, it unlawful for employers to discriminate against job applicants as a result of the 9 protected characteristics, namely: Age; disability, gender re-assignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, ethnicity and natural origin, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

At every stage of the application process, employers should give careful consideration as to the wording used in campaigns, adverts and supporting documents in order to ensure inclusive terminology is used (eg, when advertising a role, employers could highlight that they are an equal opportunities employer). A reference to the adjustments that can

be facilitated to support people in submitting applications and attending the interview should be highlighted.

According to Acas (2019a), the inclusion of a job description and person specification as part of the advert, enables employers to outline what the job requires and assists in eliminating unnecessary discrimination.

In terms of compliance with the Acas good practice guidelines when devising the below, the following has reference:

- *Job descriptions* –form the basis of the person specification and clearly articulate the primary function or **purpose** of the role, outline the key **tasks** that form the day-to-day responsibilities of the job, whilst describing the **scope** of the role and how it fits into the organisational structure, as well as setting expectations upfront for how that postholder's performance is likely to be managed.
- *Person specifications* –focus on the **skills and knowledge** required, along with relevant **experience** (NB: type of experience should be outlined as opposed to number of years in previous roles which is potentially discriminatory against a younger generation of applicants), **aptitudes** and **personal qualities**. A key requirement would be to clearly distinguish between essential and desirable attributes (CIPD, 2018).
- *Competency frameworks* –used by employers and recruitment consultants as part of job adverts or in the shortlisting process. These frameworks often provide a linkage to the core values of an organisation and provide recruiters with a tool that creates a profile of superior performers which matches people and their attributes against the key characteristics and desired competencies being sought by the employer.

3.2 Evaluate different methods of recruitment and selection.

According to Taylor (2019), the various methods of recruitment are broadly categorised into the following groupings: Internal, media, external agencies, educational liaison, other media, professional contacts and other methods. In considering two of the most widely used methods, the following has relevance:

Internal -this method encompasses internal promotions, job rotation and the rehiring of previous employees. This is a method frequently favoured by the private sector who have historically invested significantly in development of their workforce and consequently prefer to fill roles from within their own ranks. This is a cost effective means of sourcing candidates and has the additional benefit of absorbing less time and resource to onboard candidates as they are familiar with the organisation's culture, systems and processes. The disadvantages are that promoting from within can encourage "groupthink"; the "best" person for that role is unlikely to be from within the organisation and it can also serve to further entrench existing imbalances (for example, a lack of representation within minority groups).

External Agencies – this method includes job centres at one end of the spectrum and recruitment agencies at the other. In terms of the former, whilst it would seem congruent that people applying to job centres would be keen to secure work, the challenge is that benefits are monitored based on number of applications submitted so there is frequently no real desire to join a particular organisation and this method heavily limits the selection pool. Recruitment agencies, whilst being a successful method of sourcing people with scarce-skills for specialised roles, do come at a premium.

In terms of selection methods, the CIPD (2019g) state that these are split into two primary areas, namely: shortlisting and assessment. Acas (2019) advocate that a minimum of two people be involved in the sifting and selecting process in order to avoid any unintended unconscious bias, which has the propensity to negatively impact on the fairness and impartiality of any selection process. An overview of three such methods include:

- *A scoring system* – Compiling a checklist with assigned points against each line item within the job description / person specification and scoring the information in each application against these criteria supports a fair process of progressing applications dependent on scores (which could also be weighted to denote role critical requirements).
- *Interviews* – Provides an opportunity for employers to showcase the EVP, benefits and learning & development pathways of the

organisation whilst the interviewee is able to ask questions and determine whether their values and skillset align to that of the organisation (CIPID, 2019g). This method is not without risk, as ill-prepared, unskilled interviewers and a tendency towards “off the cuff” scheduling of interviews can result in people being appointed who don’t fit the organisational values and lack the skillset and knowledge base to effectively fulfil the role.

- *Assessment Centres* – Whilst these can be expensive undertakings to facilitate and consequently, are more widely used in large organisations within the public and private sector, they do provide an effective platform for assessors to observe the skills and personal attributes of candidates within a team environment (in which they are marked) and can include activities such as: Psychological tests, team exercises and roleplays, which enable candidates to demonstrate their communication and leadership skills, for example. Some organisations make use of a blended approach and integrate assessment exercises alongside an interview process.

3.3 Explain key aspects of good practice in relation to dismissal, redundancy and retirement.

These three areas of the employment relationship are particularly challenging to navigate and involve balancing the needs and wellbeing of employees, in what is frequently an emotionally fraught time, with any associated risks to the organisation (including the potential for reputational damage, litigious claims).

- *Dismissals (which can be on the grounds of misconduct, capability or ill-health):*
 - According to Gov.UK, employers are required to act in a fair, consistent and prompt manner, whilst ensuring that the organisation’s policy and process is adhered to.
 - Taylor and Woodhams (2016), state that sanctions (with the exception of those being levied from transgressions deemed as gross misconduct) should be progressive, with employees been given the support to demonstrate improvement within a designated timeframe, prior to progressing the process.

- The three-step process of investigation, hearing (with permissible representation) and right of appeal should be applied in all cases (Acas, 2015).
- *Redundancy* – In the view of Acas (nd), the focus in a redundancy situation is for employers to work with staff and their representatives to support those impacted and plan for the future - guidelines include:
 - Identifying the selection pool of employees at risk of redundancy in a manner that is objective and transparent.
 - Consultation at the formative stage of the process that allows for meaningful engagement and this can be conducted either individually or collectively if pool comprises >20 people.
 - Wherever possible, alternatives to redundancy should be sought (eg: Retraining to fulfil other roles, implementing a freeze on new hires, temporarily reducing hours, early retirement).
- *Retirement* – With the ageing workforce continuing to grow and play an important role in retaining competitive advantage (Symes, 2018), passing on the knowledge and skills of this cohort to the younger generation and supporting people at this stage to transition to the next phase of their lives is key – good practice tips include:
 - Conducting open and transparent conversations to understand their needs and advise them of options creates trust.
 - Introducing greater flexibility in terms of how work is conducted. According to the CIPD (2019c), utilising automation and remote working could facilitate a reduction in hours and more easily facilitate situations for those with caring responsibilities.
 - Ensuring that appropriate health and wellbeing policies and a commitment to lifelong learning are in place to enable people to confidently engage in the options that are available to them.

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