

AC 1.1

Large businesses adopt divisional structures to organise their operations into departments focused on particular products, services, or geographical areas (Buchanan & Huczynski, 2023). Employees benefit from having clearly defined roles aligned with the specific goals of their business unit (Robbins and Judge, 2017). This clarity enables employees to understand their contribution to the business, empowering them to perform their responsibilities effectively. This also results in clear lines of accountability, making it easier to identify when an employee is not meeting the requirements of their role (Dubey and Singhal, 2016). Beneficially, decision making is decentralised; while the business headquarters sets overarching policies and standards, each division operates autonomously with its own functional units (Buchanan & Huczynski, 2023). This allows divisions to address local issues and adapt to changes rapidly without seeking central approval. A primary disadvantage is the duplication of functions across divisions, resulting in a larger and more costly workforce (Robbins and Judge, 2017). Business division can also harm interdepartmental coordination and create rivalry as units compete for resources or regional influence (Dubey and Singhal, 2016). Organisations therefore have to invest in boundary-spanning activities such as cross-department committees and job rotation programmes to foster cross-divisional unity (Robbins and Judge, 2017).

In a matrix, employees work within temporary project teams alongside their functional or divisional roles. They are often adopted by organisations with multi-dimensional needs or requiring resource sharing (Mullins, 2019). Its dual chain of command improves employee oversight, with staff reporting to both a department and project manager (Buchanan & Huczynski, 2023). For instance, incorporating feedback from multiple managers can ensure a more thorough appraisal process. Businesses often adopt matrices to foster a culture of creativity and innovation, bringing together teams with diverse skills and specialisms. This ensures businesses can remain competitive, adapting to customer demands or market changes (Mullins, 2019). Nevertheless, membership in multiple teams can blur job roles, leading to uneven workload distribution and increased employee stress and overwork (Pakarinen & Virtanen, 2016). This can also cause confusion, particularly if employees receive conflicting instructions. Employee feedback shows that those in a matrix have to attend frequent and lengthy team meetings with colleagues of varying experience which can hinder decision-making (Pakarinen & Virtanen, 2016). Progress is also hampered by disagreements between managers with a shared span of control (Mullins, 2019). Evidently, while matrices aim to encourage teamworking, they often face barriers in fostering a cohesive and unified team environment.

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Tingsager and Smith (2022, p.43) define strategy as an organisation's objectives and the methods used to accomplish them. G4S Care and Justice provides criminal justice services, including prison operations and community support for individuals at risk of offending (G4S, n.d.). As the Ministry of Justice (MOJ) is its key customer, its objectives must directly align with the UK government's justice goals.

G4S's strategy demonstrates a clear analysis of the wider criminal justice context, recognising critical prison capacity challenges facing the MOJ stemming from increasing prison populations. G4S aims to address this need through organic development, expanding its existing services at HMP Parc and HMP Rye Hill. The strategy outlines implementation, from developing building plans to post-completion contract renegotiations (G4S, 2024a). This internal approach to driving change provides the business with strategic independence, avoiding the need to form alliances with other providers (Whittington et al., 2020). G4S's strategy also anticipates how this pressure will impact demand for future services, providing a detailed forecast of upcoming MOJ tenders for new UK prisons. This market analysis allows G4S to precisely tailor proposals to MOJ requirements for new facilities and services, giving them a competitive edge over other providers in the sector.

The strategy effectively outlines G4S' commitment to meeting the MOJ's needs for safeguarding individuals in its care by mitigating the impact of illicit drugs (G4S, 2024a). This aim is based on a robust analysis of the wider drug landscape, utilising both internal intelligence—including findings from mandatory drug tests and insights from drug-related deaths and poisonings within G4S services—and external government reports (see Office for Health Improvement & Disparities, 2024). Acutely aware of, and responsive to, the emerging threat of synthetic opioids impacting its customer's population, G4S plans to implement Naloxone training (an overdose-reversing medication) across all its services by year-end, providing a crucial, life-saving intervention. Furthermore, the strategy instructs prison directors to establish a business-wide drug strategy aimed at enhancing information sharing and collaboration across all facilities (G4S, 2024a).

Finally, G4S's strategy prioritises rehabilitation to meet MOJ targets for reducing re-offending. The strategy outlines the likely impact of the upcoming UK 2025 independent sentencing review on G4S services, which aims to implement sanctions alternatives to custody (Ministry of Justice, 2024). It anticipates fewer prisoners in G4S estates but increased demand on its community support services. To ensure resources keep up with this demand, G4S's strategy sets a goal for its Head of Community Service to submit a contribution to the review. This strategic move aims to not only influence policy towards community-based sentencing but also to encourage increased investment in treatment services (G4S, 2024a). This proactive approach ensures G4S can continue meeting rehabilitation needs, even with increased referrals.

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Inflation, defined as the rate in which prices rise (Bank of England, 2024), was identified by G4S Care and Justice as a primary risk in its last set of statutory accounts (G4S, 2024b). High inflation drives up essential costs like food and utilities, significantly increasing prison operating expenses and per-prisoner housing costs. In line with the 41-year high in inflation (reaching 11.1% in October 2022), the average cost across the sector per prisoner rose from £47,434 in the 2021-2022 financial year to £51,108 in 2022-2023 (Ministry of Justice, 2025). Renegotiating contract terms due to rate changes is therefore crucial for G4S to meet contract requirements (G4S, 2024b). Additionally, high inflation elevates workers' cost of living; for instance, from March 2022 to June 2024, 30-49% reported they found energy bills difficult to pay (Harari et al, 2024). In response, employers have to prioritise raising wages, which increases labour costs and harms company profits. This is a major challenge for private sector firms like G4S who need to keep their prices competitive.

A related economic impact is interest rates, which is the cost of borrowing money (Bank of England, 2025). Lower interest rates present increased business opportunities for G4S C&J as it allows the government to borrow and invest more in criminal justice infrastructure. For instance, since UK interest rates fell to 4.25% in May 2025 (Bank of England Database, n.d), the government has allocated £4.7 billion to building new prisons, including a proposed expansion of G4S' HMP Parc, to address capacity issues (Moffat, 2025). In contrast, high interest rates limit business growth and profitability due to high borrowing costs. Interest rates also impact cash flow in and out of the business, meaning G4S has to prioritise forecasting potential surpluses and deficits in order to ensure business stability (G4S, 2024b).

Criminal justice policy and legislative changes also impact the business. Adapting to new rules requires additional time and resources; for example, G4S was one of several prison authorities who coordinated the early release of over 1,000 inmates due to 2024 government revisions on automatic release dates (Kotecha and Casciani, 2024). To maintain a consistent flow of business, G4S must adapt its services to the evolving political environment. Beneficially, G4S is adaptable to diverse political viewpoints on justice; their custodial services cater to governments focused on strict law enforcement, while its community support services meet demands for rehabilitation. Political changes can create strain, but when used to shape services can generate opportunities for growth and profitability.

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Artificial Intelligence (AI) is defined as 'computer algorithms that can effectively simulate human cognitive processes, like learning, decision-making, and problem-solving.' (Marr, 2024, p.21). Generative AI learns from data to create content, enabling tasks to be streamlined or entirely automated (Marr, 2024). As a result, a recent survey reported that businesses who introduced AI experienced a 32% increase in savings and improved productivity (Wright et al, 2022).

While acknowledging the necessity for human involvement in complex and sensitive criminal justice support work requiring empathy (Marr, 2024), AI has numerous potential uses within G4S Care and Justice. AI can assist criminal justice professionals in generating clear reports and emails on offender risk, improving inter-agency communication with prison and probation partners. AI would allow them to lead with logic rather than emotion particularly when under pressure (Van Quaquebeke and Gerpott, 2024). AI could also enhance safety in the criminal justice workplace. For instance, G4S has already trialled *Digital Guard* in banks to analyse CCTV footage to detect signs of aggression and criminality (G4S, 2022). Additionally, AI could be used to improve employee health and wellbeing. Prison officers face high risks of burnout and trauma, exhibiting lower wellbeing than other emergency responders (Kinman and Clements, 2020). Using AI could be used as a preventative tool, analysing employee data (absences, work quality, job attitudes) to identify early indicators of stress and declining wellbeing. AI can also be integrated with wearable tech to monitor employee health and implement targeted wellbeing programs (Rao et al., 2025). In summary, AI can make workplaces more aware and responsive to employees' needs, ensuring they feel safe and equipped for their roles.

While AI offers benefits, the business must address potential negative impacts and moral concerns. A CIPD (2020) survey found that 73% of employees felt AI monitoring could damage their trust with employers. Moreover, many felt they did not receive the right training and guidance prior to the introduction of the technology. Employees also fear job displacement (Marr, 2024), and scholars caution against a 'deskilling process' due to over-reliance on AI (Van Quaquebeke and Gerpott, 2024). For successful AI implementation in organisations like G4S C&J, transparency regarding its use and purpose (as required by GDPR) is crucial to avoid a workplace culture of increased surveillance (Bri ne, 2020). Employers should also promote AI's potential to create new jobs like engineers, trainers, and ethics officers to alleviate anxieties about potential job losses (Bri ne, 2020). Finally, to ensure the technology is used effectively, employers should consult with staff and provide them with appropriate training (CIPD, 2020).

AC 2.1

Organisational culture is defined as a 'system of shared meaning' that influences individual identity and behaviour within the workplace (Robbins and Judge, 2017, p.565). Handy's model identifies four distinct types. Within a power culture, the decision of a single leader or small group of elites holds the most value, requiring few rules and procedures (Waite, 2021). Conversely, role cultures prioritise hierarchy, expecting employees to operate within the defined limits of their job roles (Waite, 2021). Thirdly, a task-oriented culture prioritises project working and teamwork, pooling expertise irrespective of individual's job roles (Mullins and McLean, 2019). Finally, person cultures prioritise individual autonomy and expertise over allegiance to the organisation (Waite, 2021). The model emphasises that culture is fluid and dynamic; the type of culture experienced can change, and all four types can be experienced simultaneously (Mullins and McLean, 2019). Importantly, this typology offers a model for employers to identify their current culture(s) and determine whether they align with the organisation's needs and circumstances (Armstrong, 2014). For example, promoting a task culture would be beneficial for organisations operating within a matrix structure.

Rock's SCARF model posits that human behaviour is determined by the brain's assessment of potential threats or benefits. Its five domains; status, certainty, autonomy, relatedness, and fairness are associated with our survival instinct, driving us towards positive situations and away from negative ones (Rock, 2008). SCARF integrates motivation theories like equity theory (fairness impacts motivation) and expectancy theory (motivation from expected rewards) to explain employee behavior (Armstrong, 2014). Management approaches that strengthen the SCARF domains enhance positive employee experiences; establishing clear expectations at onboarding, entrusting employees with difficult tasks, and engaging employees in team building activities can all reinforce worker's confidence, self-importance, and sense of belonging (Savanevičienė, Girdauskienė & Stankevičiūtė, 2025). Neglecting the SCARF model may cause employers to overemphasise extrinsic motivators while overlooking intrinsic ones. For example, although promotions may appear advantageous at first glance, those that lack clear progression or fail to enhance individual autonomy can be met with disapproval (Savanevičienė, Girdauskienė & Stankevičiūtė, 2025). SCARF is an important tool in organisational change management, enabling employers to predict and mitigate employee resistance (CIPD, 2017). Rock (2008) suggests offsetting negative change impacts in one SCARF domain by boosting positive aspects in others; for example, encouraging teamwork can decrease individual autonomy but increases relatedness.

AC 2.2

By supporting employee learning and development, G4S fosters a Human Capital culture that empowers employees to achieve their full potential. This type of culture values employees as assets, believing that investing in their skills and knowledge drives business success (Mullins, 2019). G4S ensures this by providing accessible resources and training to all staff via its company-wide e-learning platform. Additionally, G4S commits to supporting additional learning during work hours, including apprenticeship opportunities (G4S, 2024c). Acknowledging the value of employees fosters their long-term commitment to an organisation. For example, a 2018 survey of 4,000 professionals revealed that 94% would remain with a company longer if it invested in their professional growth (Spar et al, 2019).

G4S also fosters a culture of fairness by mandating annual training that reinforces its commitment to diversity, equality, and inclusion (DE&I). It also has policies on protected characteristics, including Neurodiversity (2024d) and Transgenderism (2024e) to ensure employee conduct is respectful and unprejudiced. As evidenced by the CIPD (2024a) failure to imbed these values in the workforce can cause greater workplace conflict and team rejection of those seen as different. Consequently, providing individuals with the understanding to recognise and address the diverse needs of people within their workplace fosters positive work relations. G4S also promotes an inclusive culture through mandating fair development and promotional opportunities for all staff, for instance, ensuring nomination for leadership programmes are unbiased and impartial (G4S, 2023). Valuing individual differences promotes inclusivity by acknowledging the unique strengths each person contributes to a role (Waite, 2021), encouraging individuals to pursue career advancement aspirations.

Finally, by providing regular and constructive feedback on employee development, G4S creates a culture which values and rewards good work. Every employee completes an annual or biannual Personal Development Review (PDR), used to recognise achievements and identify areas for development against the core values of the business (G4S, 2024c). This collaborative approach facilitates employee voice through open communication with line managers, which the CIPD (2024a) identifies as crucial for 'good work'. As part of this process, managers are encouraged to promote opportunities such as work shadowing, mentoring and coaching (G4S, 2024c). Goal setting fosters a culture of individual learning, peer learning, and opportunities to gain valuable experience (Mullins, 2019). This provides resources for performance improvement and can boost work ethic and motivation.

AC 2.3

According to Kotter (2012) organisations implementing change must first establish a sense of urgency by highlighting potential threats that inaction could cause. Highlighting the threats posed by a permanent work from home policy such as the blurring of work-life boundaries, isolation from the support of colleagues and managers and the expenses of home utilities could drive a return to the office (Buchanan and Huczynski, 2023). Reinforcing the change should be led by a guiding coalition of experts with strong reputations, expertise and leadership skills (Kotter, 2012). Thus, hiring a consultant with hybrid work implementation experience could guide the organisation's change process.

Next, the organisation must create a clear and realistic change vision (Kotter, 2012). Successful visions are built on consultation; initiatives that ignore frontline employee perspectives and rely only on senior management views often fail (Aguirre and Alpern, 2014). Gathering feedback from staff on the anticipated challenges of returning to the office (e.g., travel expenses, childcare arrangements) will help the organisation develop a more practical transition plan. The vision must also appeal to employees' long term interest (Kotter, 2012). The organisation could consider implementing in-work perks to make returning to the office environment more appealing. For instance, Capossela (2022) recommends establishing 'new in-person rituals' (e.g., extended lunch breaks, team workshops) to create opportunities for connection.

The final vision should be communicated clearly, simply and consistently. Actions communicate change, so leading by example is crucial (Kotter, 2012). Increasingly, employees are working remotely despite company policy, a trend known as 'hushed hybrid' working (Mayne, 2024). Consistently enforcing the hybrid policy at all organisational levels is therefore crucial. Organisation must also eliminate obstacles and align systems with the change (Kotter, 2012). HR policies should therefore reinforce the hybrid working model and establish it as a contractual expectation for all employees. Organisations can also empower employees by appointing them as change ambassadors (Aguirre & Alpern, 2014) or recruit them to steering groups (CIPD, 2024b). A pilot group of employees could test the hybrid working model before full implementation and provide feedback to highlight its benefits.

In the final stages, Kotter (2012) promotes generating visible, unambiguous, short-term wins in the application of change to sustain its momentum and undermine its critics. Brown (2018) notes that big data helps show employees the impact of change, grounding those resistant to it. In this scenario, HR data (sickness, turnover) and post-evaluation surveys that measure employees' wellbeing, relationships, and productivity could be used to quantify the positive outcomes of hybrid working (CIPD, 2024b). This is also key in fulfilling Kotter's (2012) final step which is embedding the change into the organisation's culture; it is evidence that the shift to hybrid working is better than the old way of working from home and establishes this as the new norm.

AC 2.4

The Kubler-Ross change curve illustrates the different emotional phases individuals experience when responding to change; Denial, Anger, Bargaining, Depression, and Acceptance (Taylor, 2022a). They show that adapting to change is a gradual journey which takes time. Individuals often encounter numerous negative feelings during this transition period before ultimately embracing the change. Therefore, to successfully implement organisational change, businesses require emotional intelligence to understand what could generate resistance (Taylor, 2022a).

Initially change can evoke feelings of anger, shock or denial particularly if it is sudden. This occurs because individuals perceive change as a source of disturbance or a challenge to their established norms (Elizabeth Kubler-Ross Foundation, n.d.). For instance, Abebe, Bakombo, and Konkle (2023) observed that Canadian Twitter users' posts during the COVID-19 pandemic displayed denial through dismissing the virus's severity, and expressed frustration about poor work from home arrangements including bad internet connection.

During the bargaining phase, individuals attempt to delay or negotiate the change. This is a coping mechanism that people use to protect themselves from its full effects (Elizabeth Kubler-Ross Foundation, n.d). This shows that change can make people uncomfortable, preferring the security of the familiar. Feelings of sadness and hopelessness can also be triggered by change, leading to the depression phase (Elizabeth Kubler-Ross Foundation, n.d). The loss of life and economic fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic, for instance, incited such feelings (Abebe, Bakombo, and Konkle, 2023). This demonstrates that individuals often feel powerless when change is imposed.

Finally, individuals begin experimenting with ways of adopting the change until it is eventually integrated into their way of doing things; 'where the change becomes part of the individual's new reality' (Elizabeth Kubler-Ross Foundation, n.d). For instance, people adapted to the pandemic by adhering to required testing and advocating for COVID-19 policies (Abebe, Bakombo, and Konkle, 2023). Importantly, the model shows that change is experienced differently by each individual as these phases can be repeated and can overlap (Elizabeth Kubler-Ross Foundation, n.d) As highlighted by Waite (2021), how people respond to change can vary depending on various aspects such as their upbringing, personality, or beliefs. The model reflects this, showing that change is not linear, but a 'complex and cyclical' process (Elizabeth Kubler-Ross Foundation, n.d).

AC 2.5

Wellbeing at work is important to retain employees by improving job satisfaction. Better pay and conditions remain primary reasons for employee turnover, therefore fair compensation (CIPD's 1st dimension of good work) is crucial in ensuring employees feel valued (CIPD, 2024a). Stressors like debt and rising costs harm employee's financial wellbeing (Hesketh and Cooper, 2019), therefore employers' roles in reducing these stressors through provisions like subsidised meals, childcare, and medical benefits are crucial (Wilkinson, 2022). Beyond pay, the CIPD argues that good work should be meaningful and fulfilling; 57% of employees reported they would still find job satisfaction regardless of financial need (CIPD, 2024a). Tasking individuals with more complex and varied responsibilities keeps work mentally stimulating and within individuals' skillset (CIPD, 2024a). This boosts their sense of purpose, fostering discretionary effort whereby individuals go beyond basic job duties (Hesketh and Cooper, 2019). This increased dedication ultimately benefits the employer by ensuring the delivery of higher quality services.

Prioritising wellbeing is also vital in reducing workplace absences, evidenced by 29.6 million working days lost in 2023 due to work-related ill health in the UK (Health and Safety Executive, n.d), coupled with the predominance of presenteeism and leavism within the workplace (CIPD, 2024a). Good job design, the CIPD's 4th dimension of good work, positively impacts psychological wellbeing by fostering individual autonomy over ways of working. Options such as part-time roles, paid sick leave, and adjustments to workspace design—including quiet areas or rest spaces—are all effective strategies that allow employees to remain in work whilst also prioritising their individual needs (ACAS, n.d a). Promoting employee voice, the CIPD's sixth dimension of good work, is also key. By focusing on the underlying reasons for absences rather than implementing penalties, organisations can foster open and honest conversations about health and wellbeing with their employees (Wilkinson, 2022). Such measures provide crucial support for employees while simultaneously reducing sickness-related costs for employers, which reached £103 billion in 2023 (Jackson, 2024).

Finally, wellbeing is important in fostering employee resilience. Supportive relationships at work (CIPD's 5th dimension) are key. Research indicates that leaders who build strong connections and offer guidance significantly enhance an employee's ability to withstand challenges (CIPD, 2021). Conversely, 'management by exception,' characterised by excessive criticism or bullying, and 'laissez-faire' management, marked by a lack of encouragement or feedback, both negatively impact confidence and self esteem (Hesketh and Cooper, 2019, p.40). Therefore, management training in difficult conversations and emotional intelligence is crucial for effectively supporting employees (Wilkinson, 2022). Research shows how resilience reduces employees' vulnerability to job-related stress and the effects of conflict (Bernuzzi, Sommovigo and Setti, 2024). This benefits employers by creating a robust and reliable workforce that can work well under pressure, whilst allowing the employee to excel in their roles.

AC 3.1

An employee's lifecycle encompasses their journey leading up to, during, and following their employment in an organisation (Smith and Mitchell, 2024). People professionals ensure a consistent stream of talent and expertise into the business through the initial stages of attraction and recruitment. Crucially, they promote equality and inclusivity from role design to selection, to cultivate a diverse workforce and ensure compliance with the requirements of the Equality Act (Wilkinson and Taylor, 2022). Effective recruitment officers develop job opportunities that are accessible to all; ensuring they are advertised on a range of platforms, clearly specify requirements, and use unbiased language (CIPD, 2024c). At selection, they facilitate reasonable adjustments for candidates and ensure individuals are evaluated through a mix of structured questions and skill-based activities to enable effective hiring decisions (CIPD, 2024c).

The lifecycle's subsequent stages focus on onboarding and continuous employee development which are important in meeting employee expectations and retaining talent (Wilkinson and Taylor, 2022). People professionals reinforce a learning culture by facilitating development opportunities, for instance, collaborating with line managers on succession planning, offering employees "acting up" opportunities to prepare them for senior roles (Taylor, 2022b). HR professionals can also use appraisal data to pinpoint organisational learning needs, actively shaping the design of relevant development and training programmes to ensure they reinforce the business's aims and values (Perkins, 2022).

Whether employees leave voluntarily or involuntarily, people professionals play a primary role at the end of the employment life cycle. At the separation stage, employing data-driven methods like exit interviews are crucial for HR. This feedback helps prevent avoidable turnover, identifies and resolves underlying organisational issues, and mitigates potential reputational damage from lingering negative sentiments, especially online (Mayne, 2023). HR professionals also provide transitional support out of work; for retirees, this includes exploring mentorship opportunities or new roles in the lead up to departure to mitigate feelings of anxiety or loss of purpose (Taylor, 2022b). When jobs are at risk, HR prioritises avoiding involuntary redundancy by exploring retention options like hiring freezes or reassignments. If redundancy becomes unavoidable, HR transparently guides employees through the final process (Smith and Mitchell, 2024). For performance-related dismissals, HR ensures disciplinary policies are enforced legally and fairly, providing departing employees with equitable treatment and assuring the organisation that it is compliant with employment law (Taylor, 2022b).

AC 3.2

Vertical integration is the alignment of HR practices with business strategy, while horizontal integration ensures that HR functions work seamlessly to achieve organisational objectives (Tingsager and Smith, 2024). Both are key components of effective strategic human resource management (SHRM), which ensures people management is structured to meet long-term business goals (CIPD, 2024d).

Strategic recruitment is one form of vertical integration. By sourcing the people with the right talent and skills, people practice ensures organisations have the necessary human capital to meet strategic goals and to maintain a competitive edge (Phillips and Gully, 2015). Beneficially, strategic recruitment evolves to support the organisation at different phases of its lifecycle; rapidly growing businesses necessitate forward-thinking recruitment strategies while declining businesses must refocus their human resources practices on managing workforce downsizing (Armstrong, 2011). Employee training and development must also be strategically aligned with the evolving external factors impacting the business. For instance, ensuring work practices align with changes in regulations (Reilly, 2012). Aligning reward systems with organisational objectives also reinforces business strategy by providing employees with the motivation and incentives to meet business goals. Businesses focused on productivity tend to enforce extrinsic rewards systems based on output, whereas strategies focused on organisational innovation are supported through intrinsic rewards like development opportunities to foster employee growth (Hsieh and Chen, 2011). Furthermore, people practice supports organisational strategy through job design, setting clear expectations for employees and ensuring their work aligns with the company's operational methods. For instance, innovation-focused strategies benefit from broader job roles which involve team working and cross-departmental collaboration (Holbeche, 2009).

Horizontal integration is achieved through 'bundling' HR practices so that they support and strengthen each other, ensuring that people strategy is consistently applied across the organisation (Armstrong, 2011). One example is aligning employee reward systems with performance standards through the integration of competency frameworks, competency-based pay structures, and performance management systems (Armstrong, 2011). This clarifies expectations for employees and the corresponding rewards they can anticipate. Lack of horizontal integration can diminish employee morale and perceived value, for example when performance review feedback does not align with available training and development (Marchington, Rubery, and Grimshaw, 2011). Furthermore, it can lead to issues of fairness and equality if disciplinary procedures are mis-aligned with behavioural and standards policies. This is a particular challenge for multi-employer networks, where contradictory rules may exist (Marchington, Rubery, and Grimshaw, 2011). Horizontal integration therefore guarantees a consistently favorable employee experience, which is essential for meeting objectives related to employee engagement, development, and retention.

AC 3.3

Stakeholder consultation is vital in evidence-based human resource practice, ensuring that better quality decisions are made as opposed to those based on impulse or guesswork (Rousseau and Barends, 2011). Consultation allows employees to influence changes in the workplace that directly affect them. Failure to consult can reduce employee morale, increase stress and damage trust in the organisation (ACAS, n.d. b) Simply appearing to ask for feedback when decisions have already been made—a practice known as ‘pseudo-consultation’ must be avoided. Instead, employers should genuinely listen and react to the ideas and concerns employees raise (Torrington et al, p.436).

Given the proposed four-day week will affect everyone in the organisation, surveys are invaluable for broad input. This approach is inexpensive, quick to implement, and reaches a wide number of employees (Marchington et al, 2020; Woodhams and Perkins, 2024). Beneficially, online surveys such as SurveyMonkey allow employees to participate regardless of availability and submit feedback at their own pace (Marchington et al, 2020). There is always a risk that the survey will receive a low completion rate (Woodhams and Perkins, 2024), therefore it is essential that the purpose of the survey is properly communicated to employees and reassurance of confidentiality is provided (Armstrong, 2014).

Opinions on the 4-day week will vary; some will see it as an opportunity gaining an extra day off whilst improving time management and productivity, while those who prefer traditional work structures may fear reduced managerial contact or feel pressured to complete the same workload in less time (Christian, 2022). Interviews facilitate deeper exploration of these change barriers, allowing interviewers to ask more open questions and prompt individuals for more detailed insights (Woodhams and Perkins, 2024). Interviewer bias and situational factors can skew participant responses (Armstrong, 2014; Marchington et al., 2020), therefore it is crucial that those involved in consultation are trained to listen, avoid assumptions, consider all suggestions, and use non-confrontational language (ACAS, n.d. b) .

Focus groups would be a suitable method to understand how the 4-day shift would collectively impact the roles and responsibilities of specific teams. Bringing together employees encourages discussion, ensuring a range of views can be observed at once (Woodhams and Perkins, 2024). Focus groups also act as useful survey follow ups to discuss any negative feedback that emerged during initial consultation (Armstrong, 2014). Achieving an accurate reflection of views requires selecting a workforce-representative sample and structuring discussions to promote fair participation to prevent any one individual from dominating (Woodhams and Perkins, 2024).

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