

LEVEL 7 ASSESSMENT SPECIFICATION

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Executive Summary

This essay looks at the human resource management (HRM) challenges faced by EC Healthcare and The University of Hong Kong Shenzhen Hospital (HKU Shenzhen Hospital) as they expand into the Greater Bay Area of China. In today's global environment, companies are increasingly exploring new markets to gain a competitive advantage. EC Healthcare, the largest non-hospital medical service provider in Hong Kong, aims to diversify its services while dealing with recruitment and training issues in a new area. Similarly, HKU Shenzhen Hospital, a significant public healthcare facility, combines academic and clinical resources but faces similar HR challenges.

The analysis focuses on two key HRM areas: employee recruitment and training and development. Both organizations encounter problems such as cultural differences, a competitive job market, and local regulations. They have implemented strategies like local recruitment and tailored training programs to address skill gaps among new employees. Community engagement and strong employer branding are also important for attracting talents.

The findings highlight the need for effective HRM practices to build a skilled workforce. Recommendations include forming partnerships with local institutions, developing

standardized training programs, and creating a regional HR center of excellence to improve recruitment and training efforts.

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1. Introduction

In today's interconnected global landscape, companies are increasingly pursuing cross-border expansion to capitalize on new opportunities and strengthen their competitive edge. EC healthcare, a prominent healthcare provider in Hong Kong, has recently extended its services into the Greater Bay Area of China, seeking to explore emerging markets and diversify its service offerings. However, this international growth has introduced several human resource management (HRM) challenges, particularly in employee recruitment and training and development. This essay will examine these challenges, detail the strategies implemented by EC Healthcare's HR team during this transition, and compare their approach with that of The University of Hong Kong Shenzhen Hospital, another healthcare organization encountering similar issues. Through this analysis, we will uncover valuable insights into effective HRM strategies within the context of international expansion.

2. Background of EC Healthcare

EC Healthcare (2138.HK) is a constituent stock of the Hang Seng Composite Index and the MSCI Hong Kong Small Cap Index (EC Healthcare, 2024). EC Healthcare is Hong Kong's largest non-hospital medical service provider, focusing on preventive and precision medicine to build a leading one-stop healthcare ecosystem. With a mission to bring health, beauty, and happiness to more people, the company offers a full range of medical services, including health checkups, vaccinations, lab testing, imaging diagnostics, primary care, specialist consultations, dental care, and pain management. Additionally, EC Healthcare provides aesthetic medical, beauty, wellness, and veterinary services. Currently operating 182 service points across a total area of 657,000 square feet, the company features 46 diverse brands to cater to a wide range of customers, offering both luxury and affordable options (EC Healthcare, 2024). The company operates numerous service points like Greater Bay Area, China and offers a comprehensive range of medical services, aiming to build a leading one-stop healthcare ecosystem. Currently, EC Healthcare adopts a "boutique store" model for its service outlet in mainland China, offering limited customer experiences. When necessary, customers are also referred to Hong Kong for more comprehensive health treatments,

achieving a win-win business opportunity (Mingpao, 2021).

3. Background of The University of Hong Kong Shenzhen Hospital

The University of Hong Kong-Shenzhen Hospital (HKU-SZH), established by the Shenzhen municipal government with input from the University of Hong Kong, is a comprehensive public hospital that opened on July 1, 2012 (HKU-SZU, 2024). It is a key healthcare provider in the Greater Bay Area, affiliated with The University of Hong Kong. This hospital combines academic resources with clinical practice, focusing on delivering high-quality medical services and advancing healthcare education. Similar to EC Healthcare, the hospital has faced challenges related to expansion and integrating into a new market while maintaining its commitment to excellence in patient care.

4. HRM function areas are focus on recruitment and training and development

These areas are essential for establishing a competent workforce capable of meeting the operational needs of both EC Healthcare and The University of Hong Kong Shenzhen Hospital in their respective expansions. The transition from a local to a regional HRM role required the local HR team to adapt to different regulatory environments, cultural expectations, and market dynamics.

4.1 Challenges in employee recruitment

During their expansions into Greater Bay Area, both EC Healthcare and The University of Hong Kong Shenzhen Hospital faced significant challenges in employee recruitment.

4.1.1 Cultural Differences

One major challenge was navigating cultural differences in the region, which is known for its diverse mix of cultures, languages, and employment practices (Master-insight, 2020). For example, Nepotism is possibility to encourage practice of hiring relatives traditional Chinese values often emphasize the importance of relationships and family

connections in hiring (Howorth, 2024). To address this, HR teams could launch recruitment campaigns that are culturally sensitive, highlighting the importance of community and relationships. This might involve creating job advertisements in both Mandarin and Cantonese. The AIDA model, representing attention, interest, desire, and action, is a marketing framework that outlines the stages a consumer experiences when making a product or service (CFI, 2024). AIDA in advertisement using culturally relevant images and messages that resonate with local candidates. Additionally, engaging with the community by participating in local job fairs and events can help build trust and establish relationships with potential applicants. This proactive community engagement not only attracts candidates but also enhances the organizations' reputations within the local context.

Internal recruitment methods:

Using internal recruitment allows organizations to take advantage of existing talent and promote from within. This can include job postings on internal platforms, conducting talent reviews to identify potential candidates for advancement, and implementing succession planning initiatives. For instance, both organizations could encourage current employees to apply for new positions or promotions, fostering a culture of

growth and loyalty. This approach can boost employee morale and reduce turnover, as individuals feel valued and recognized for their contributions.

External recruitment methods:

On the external side, both organizations can explore various methods to attract new talent. These methods may include electronic recruitment, print advertisement, social media recruiting, employment agencies like 51 job, Liepin, and Zhaopin are widely used in mainland China (China Briefing, 2024). Collaborating with universities and vocational schools to create internship programs or job placement initiatives can also help build a pipeline of qualified candidates who are familiar with the organizations' values and practices.

4.1.2 Competitive job market

The healthcare sector in the Greater Bay Area is highly competitive, with many organizations vying for skilled professionals, especially in specialized fields like nursing and surgery. To stand out, both EC Healthcare and The University of Hong Kong Shenzhen Hospital must develop unique value propositions to attract talent.

Internal recruitment methods:

By promoting internal talent, organizations can highlight career advancement

opportunities that are exclusive to current employees. This not only motivates staff but also shows the organization's commitment to professional development.

External recruitment methods:

To attract external talent, both organizations could offer enhanced employee benefits, such as competitive salaries, flexible working hours, and comprehensive health packages tailored to local needs. For example, support for Hong Kong employment includes various social security subsidies, employment incentives, and living allowances. Additionally, financial subsidies are provided in accordance with the personal income tax benefits of Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (Avo, 2024). Establishing clear career paths and providing ongoing professional development programs can further differentiate them from competitors. Emphasizing these opportunities during the recruitment process can make the organizations more attractive to potential hires.

4.1.3 Compliance with local regulations

Navigating the complex employment laws in mainland China can be challenging, as organizations must ensure compliance with local regulations regarding contracts, working hours, and employee rights.

Internal recruitment methods:

For internal recruitment, organizations can hold training sessions to educate current employees about their rights and company policies, ensuring everyone understands compliance from within. This approach fosters a culture of transparency and accountability.

External recruitment methods:

To effectively manage compliance in external recruitment, HR teams can engage local legal experts to provide guidance and training on current labor laws. Utilizing HR technology to automate recruitment processes, including contract generation, can also help ensure that legal requirements are met, minimizing the risk of disputes.

4.1.4 Staff planning and recruitment in an international context

In an international context, effective staff planning and recruitment require a strategic approach that aligns with the organization's global vision and local market needs. This involves:

Workforce planning: Understanding the specific skills and competencies needed in the Greater Bay Area and forecasting future staffing needs based on organizational growth and local market trends.

Diverse sourcing strategies: Using a mix of internal and external recruitment methods

to build a diverse workforce that reflects the community and enhances the organization's ability to serve a varied patient population.

Cultural sensitivity training: Providing training for HR staff and hiring managers to ensure they are aware of cultural nuances and can effectively engage with candidates from diverse backgrounds.

By effectively combining internal and external recruitment strategies, EC Healthcare and The University of Hong Kong Shenzhen Hospital can navigate the competitive job market and cultivate a diverse, skilled workforce.

4.2 Challenges in training and development

After hiring new employees, both EC Healthcare and The University of Hong Kong Shenzhen Hospital faced important challenges in training and development. This process is vital for improving employee skills and knowledge, especially in the fast-changing healthcare field where new technologies and practices are always emerging.

One major challenge is addressing skill gaps among new hires due to diverse labor market in the Greater Bay Area. Employees with varying educational backgrounds and experience levels lead to inconsistent performance. Creating targeted training programs

is essential to close these gaps and enhance new hires' confidence and competence.

Additionally, employee must possess a junior or higher professional technical qualification and a valid nurse practitioner license from the People's Republic of China, aligning with HK standards (HKU-SZE, 2024).

On-the-job training is a key part of this process, allowing employees to learn through hands-on experience while working under the guidance of experienced colleagues. This method is particularly effective in healthcare, where applying skills in real-time is crucial. Several useful on-the-job training methods include:

Orientation: This initial training introduces new employees to the company's culture, policies, and procedures. For example, a new nurse at The University of Hong Kong Shenzhen Hospital would participate in an orientation program covering important topics like hospital policies, emergency procedures, and patient care standards. This knowledge helps new hires adjust quickly and understand their responsibilities.

Apprenticeship: This structured training combines on-the-job experience with work-based learning (Pautler, 1997). For instance, a new medical technician at EC Healthcare

might work alongside an experienced skills while also attending workshops on medical skills. This approach ensures that apprentices gain both practical skills and necessary theoretical knowledge for their roles.

Coaching: In this method, experienced employees provide guidance and feedback to newer staff members. For example, a senior physician may act as a mentor who coach a newly hired doctor on how to interact with patients and make diagnosis. This personalized support helps new hires develop their skills while receiving real-time feedback, building their confidence.

Job rotation: This method involves moving employees between different roles or departments within the organization. For instance, a nurse might rotate through various departments, such as pediatrics, surgery, and emergency department, over several months. This experience broadens their understanding of the hospital's operations and allows them to apply diverse skills, ultimately improving patient care.

In addition to on-the-job training, off-the-job training is also important for employee development. This type of training takes place outside the regular work environment

and includes workshops, seminars and online courses. Off-the-job training helps employees gain theoretical knowledge and specialized skills that are not easily taught during regular work hours. For example, both organizations might invest in external training programs focused on advanced medical technologies or leadership skills to prepare employees for future roles. Besides, practical mandarin course for healthcare also important for the career which is includes essential dialogues and nursing terminology relevant to varies medical specialties, with in-class practice to ensure skills are applicable in real-world healthcare settings (AHKNS, 2024).

Another significant challenge was helping new employees fit into the company culture. As both organizations expanded into new areas, it was crucial for new hires to understand and embrace the corporate culture. This cultural integration is important for teamwork and overall harmony within the organization. Training programs should include the company's values, mission and expected behaviors. Activities like workshops and team-building exercises can support new hires in adjusting to the workplace, ultimately improving collaboration and productivity.

Lastly, resource allocation for training posed a challenge. Developing effective training

programs requires significant financial and human resources, which can strain budgets, especially during expansion. Organizations need to balance the need for training with available resources, often making difficult decisions about the extent of their training initiatives. To address this, both EC Healthcare and The University of Hong Kong Shenzhen Hospital could use technology, such as e-learning platforms, to provide cost-effective and flexible training options.

By addressing these challenges, both organizations can enhance their training and development processes, ensuring that new hires are well-prepared to succeed in their roles and contribute to the organization's goals.

5. Scope of analysis

This analysis examines the challenges faced by EC Healthcare and The University of Hong Kong Shenzhen Hospital during their expansions into the Greater Bay Area.

5.1 Stakeholders impacted

Key stakeholders impacted by these challenges include:

Employees: New hires who require onboarding and ongoing development.

HR Management: The HR teams responsible for designing and implementing recruitment and training strategies.

Communities: Communities affected by the hiring practices and service delivery of both organizations.

5.2 Comparison of challenges

Both organizations faced similar challenges related to cultural adaptation and competition for talent. However, their approaches differed. EC Healthcare focused more on internal recruitment strategies, while The University of Hong Kong Shenzhen Hospital emphasized partnerships with local educational institutions to enhance its

recruitment efforts.

6. Analysis of challenges and solutions

6.1 Recruitment challenges

To tackle recruitment challenges, both organizations implemented various initiatives:

Localized recruitment strategies: EC Healthcare engaged local HR consultants to tailor its recruitment processes to align with the cultural and economic context of the Greater Bay Area. The University of Hong Kong Shenzhen Hospital similarly worked with local experts to refine its strategies, emphasizing community engagement.

Employer branding: Both organizations invested in employer branding initiatives that highlighted their commitments to employee well-being, professional development, and community impact. This approach aimed to distinguish themselves from competitors (Beardwell, 2017).

6.2 Training challenges

In response to training and development challenges, both organizations undertook the following actions:

Recognizing the diverse skill sets of new employees, both organizations developed tailored training programs to address specific gaps in knowledge and skills. This helped

speed up the onboarding process.

Mentorship initiatives: Implementing mentorship programs facilitated knowledge transfer from experienced staff to new hires, promoting cultural integration and enhancing job readiness in both organizations (Gibb, 2011).

6.3 Positive and negative impacts

The initiatives undertaken by both organizations produced both positive and negative impacts:

Positive impacts: Refined recruitment strategies resulted in a more diverse workforce and improved employee engagement for both organizations. Customized training programs led to quicker adaption of new employees, fostering a positive work environment.

Negative impacts: Engaging local consultants and developing tailored training programs increased operational costs. Additionally, the time required for training initiatives delayed the full operational capacity of newly established facilities in both organizations.

7. Conclusion

The expansions of EC Healthcare and The University of Hong Kong Shenzhen Hospital into the Greater Bay Area highlight the critical importance of effective human resource management in navigating international markets. By focusing on employee recruitment and training and development, both organizations can address challenges related to cultural differences, competitive job markets, and regulatory compliance. The lessons learned from this comparative analysis provide valuable insights for other organizations facing similar challenges in global expansions. By implementing the recommended action plans, both organizations can position themselves for sustained success in the increasingly competitive healthcare landscape.

8. Recommendation for solutions

To enhance their HRM strategies further, the following action plans are recommended for both organizations:

8.1 Short-term action plan (0-6 months)

Strengthen local partnerships: Both organizations should form alliances with local universities and vocational training centers to create internship and training programs.

Pros: Build a talent pipeline and enhances community relations.

Cons: Initial time investment to establish partnerships.

8.2 Mid-term action plan (6-12 months)

Develop a comprehensive training framework: Create a standardized training framework that can be adapted for local contexts, focusing on both technical skills and cultural integration.

Pros: Ensures consistency in training and improves employee readiness.

Cons: Requires significant resources for development and implementation.

8.3 Long-term action plan (1-3 years)

Establish a regional HR center of excellence: Both organizations should create an HR center focusing on best practices in recruitment and training across the Great Bay Area.

Pros: Facilitates knowledge sharing and strategic alignment, enhances HR capabilities.

Cons: Requires substantial investment in infrastructure and skilled personnel.

8.4 Required resources and potential outcomes

The successful implementation of these action plans will require financial resources, human capital, and time. Potential outcomes include improved recruitment efficiency, enhanced employee engagement, and a stronger brand presence in the Greater Bay Area healthcare market for both organizations.

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