

What is Human Resource Management?

The following is extracted from Armstrong's Handbook of Human Resource Management Practice 2012 12th edition

Introduction

Human resource management (HRM) is concerned with all aspects of how people are employed and managed in organizations. It covers activities such as strategic HRM, human capital management, knowledge management, corporate social responsibility, organization development, resourcing (workforce planning, recruitment and selection and talent management), learning and development, performance and reward management, employee relations, employee wellbeing and the provision of employee services.

HRM defined

Human resource management can be defined in line with the original concept as a strategic, integrated and coherent approach to the employment, development and wellbeing of the people working in organizations. It was described more pragmatically by Boxall and Purcell (2003: 1) as 'all those activities associated with the management of employment relationships in the firm'.

A later more comprehensive definition was offered by Watson (2010: 919): "HRM is the managerial utilisation of the efforts, knowledge, capabilities and committed behaviours which people contribute to an authoritatively co-ordinated human enterprise as part of an employment exchange (or more temporary contractual arrangement) to carry out work tasks in a way which enables the enterprise to continue into the future."

The goals of HRM

The goals of HRM are to:

- support the organization in achieving its objectives by developing and implementing HR strategies that are integrated with the business strategy (strategic HRM);
- contribute to the development of a high-performance culture;
- ensure that the organization has the talented, skilled and engaged people it needs;
- create a positive employment relationship between management and employees and a climate of mutual trust;
- encourage the application of an ethical approach to people management.

HRM and line managers

Beer and his colleagues were the first to underline the HRM tenet that it belongs to line managers. They suggested that HRM had two characteristic features:

- 1) line managers accept more responsibility for ensuring the alignment of competitive strategy and HR policies; and
- 2) HR has the mission of setting policies that govern how HR activities are developed and implemented in ways that make them more mutually reinforcing.

HRM is delivered in most organizations by HR specialists working in partnership with line managers.