

The changing role of human resources management

Human resource management (HRM) has been a misunderstood and underutilised business resource for many years - but modern organisations are waking up to the potential and competitive advantage that a strong HR team can offer.

HR staff used to be seen as the administrative enforcers of the business' management team - executive-centric and reactive, hindering the other employees in performing their jobs with complex layers of bureaucracy.

These days, however, there is a clear move away from seeing HR as a purely administrative activity, and towards appreciating it as complex, interpersonal and consultative work that requires a wide range of skills, from counselling and communication to business planning and strategy. Today's HR manager is at the centre of the organisation's web of employees and departments. Here are three ways that HR has a direct influence on the success of the business.

Supporting the business

The HR function must adapt to what the modern business needs - a highly dynamic employee management and planning team that can react and adapt to the rapidly changing requirements of the organisation. HR should be considered a strategic, integrated position that directly influences the business' success because HR works so closely with its human capital - the organisation's true competitive advantage and central value offering. By managing current, incoming and outgoing employees, HR ensures the company always has the right people for the right jobs.

Employee engagement

HR should no longer be seen as an employee's last resort in the case of negative encounters - in fact, modern HR should be defined by active engagement with employee issues, championing staff members in the workplace, listening to concerns, and building a partnership between HR, employees and managers.

Managing expectations, communicating, being flexible and providing adequate training are some of the most important factors in keeping employees happy. HR managers can go further, too - performing human-centred performance appraisals, actively driving career development and upskilling, developing effective reward systems and designing jobs to fit both the employees and the needs of the business. Taking an active and engaged role in employee happiness promotes better overall performance because it helps to retain and motivate staff.

Change management

Change management is the process in which HR managers ensure that employees have the necessary skills and information when an aspect of their work environment changes - for example, that everyone is trained to operate a new software package that is being rolled out throughout the company. A good change management process ensures that the change goes smoothly, with minimal interruption and maximum buy-in from the staff.

HR can play a vital role in ensuring that change is carried out according to plan because of its unique position as the hub of all employee relations. This added dimension allows the HR manager to take a direct role in developing the business according to the available human resources and capacity, meaning that drastic changes are better thought through and presented in a manageable way to the employees who need to work through it.

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