

ARMSTRONG'S  
HANDBOOK OF  
**HUMAN RESOURCE  
MANAGEMENT  
PRACTICE**

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**MICHAEL ARMSTRONG  
AND STEPHEN TAYLOR**

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# **ARMSTRONG'S HANDBOOK OF HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PRACTICE**



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# PREFACE TO THE 13TH EDITION

The 13th edition of the *Handbook of Human Resource Management Practice* includes an entirely new part containing three chapters covering the increasingly important subject of international human resource management. Other new chapters have been added on rewarding special groups and employment law. The chapters on HRM, motivation and engagement have been completely revised. Apart from these substantial changes, the handbook has been brought up-to-date by reference to the findings of a number of significant research projects and other investigations of how HRM operates in practice. The plan of the book is illustrated in the ‘route map’ shown in Figure 0.1.

The companion website at [www.koganpage.com/armstrong/HRMPresources](http://www.koganpage.com/armstrong/HRMPresources) provides extensive additional resources for lecturers and students. These comprise:

- A lecturers’ manual containing notes on how teaching could be organized by reference to the chapters in the main text and the supplementary material in the manual. Suggestions are made on various kinds of semesters and guidance is provided on the links between the handbook text and CIPD programmes. The manual includes sections for each of the first 43 general HRM chapters containing a summary of the main learning points, an outline of the subject matter, discussion points and questions with comments on the points to be considered. There are 136 multiple choice questions, 78 case studies and four role playing exercises. Most of the chapters contain supplementary abstracts from relevant HRM literature – a total of 150.
- Additional material is provided for lecturers in the shape of 613 PowerPoint slides with notes covering all the chapters except the toolkits.
- A students’ manual consisting of material which can be used to reinforce the contents of the main book. Summaries of each chapter are provided and in addition most of the chapters include supplementary abstracts from relevant HRM literature (150 in all). To assist in revision, the extra material includes 135 multiple choice questions and 420 ‘flash’ cards containing questions and answers about key aspects of the subject matter. There are also 43 case studies.
- A glossary of HRM terms (988 entries).
- An HRM bibliography (832 entries).

**FIGURE 0.1** *Handbook of Human Resource Management Practice* route map

# PART I

## The practice of human resource management

### PART I CONTENTS

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- 01 The essence of human resource management (HRM)
- 02 Strategic HRM
- 03 Delivering HRM – systems and roles
- 04 HRM and performance
- 05 Human capital management
- 06 Knowledge management
- 07 Competency-based HRM
- 08 The ethical dimension of HRM
- 09 Corporate social responsibility

### Introduction

---

Human resource management (HRM) is a comprehensive and coherent approach to the employment and development of people. HRM can be regarded as a philosophy about how people should be managed, which is underpinned by a number of theories relating to the behaviour of people and organizations. It is concerned with the contribution it can make to improving organizational effectiveness through people but it is, or should be, equally concerned with the ethical dimension – how people should be treated in accordance with a set of moral values. HRM involves the application of policies and practices in the fields of organization design and development, employee resourcing, learning and development, performance and reward and the

provision of services that enhance the well-being of employees. These are based on human resource (HR) strategies that are integrated with one another and aligned to the business strategy.

Some people object to the term ‘human resources’ because it implies that people can be manipulated like any other factor of production. Instead they favour ‘people management’. But HRM is the most commonly used term.

Whatever term is adopted the approach should be based on the principle laid down by Schneider (1987: 450): ‘Organizations are the people in them; that people make the place.’ He went on to explain that: ‘Positive job attitudes for workers in an organization can be expected when the natural inclinations of the persons there are allowed to be reflected

in their behaviours by the kinds of processes and structures that have evolved there.'

As Keegan and Francis (2010: 873) noted: HR work is now 'largely framed as a business issue'. The emphasis is on business alignment and strategic fit. These are important requirements but focusing on them can lead HR professionals to place correspondingly less emphasis on employee needs and motivations when developing their new and altered arrangements. A simplistic view of the business imperative permits little room for considering how HR strategy should impact on individual employees. HRM indeed aims to support the achievement of business goals but, equally, it should aim to build

a relationship based on trust, openness and personal fulfilment.

This first part of the handbook deals with the broad areas and concerns of the practice of HRM covering its conceptual basis, the strategic framework within which HRM activities take place and the various factors that affect it, including the impact of HRM on performance, the specific functions of human capital management, knowledge management and competency-based HRM and, importantly, the ethical and social responsible considerations that need to be taken into account when practising HRM. International HRM is dealt with in Part IX.

## References

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Keegan, A and Francis, H (2010) Practitioner talk: the changing textscape of HRM and emergence of HR business partnership, *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 21 (6), pp 873–98

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## 01

# The essence of human resource management (HRM)

## KEY CONCEPTS AND TERMS

Added value	Humanism
Agency theory	Institutional theory
AMO theory	Matching model of HRM
Commitment	Motivation
Contextual model of HRM	Organizational behaviour theory
Contingency theory	Organizational capability
European model of HRM	Resource-based theory
5-P model of HRM	Resource dependence theory
Hard HRM	Soft HRM
Harvard framework	Strategic alignment
HR philosophy	Strategic human resource management (SHRM)
Human capital theory	Transaction costs theory
Human relations	Unitarist
Human resource management (HRM)	

## LEARNING OUTCOMES

On completing this chapter you should be able to define these key concepts. You should also know about:

- The fundamental concept of HRM and how it developed
- The meaning of HRM
- The goals of HRM
- The philosophy of HRM
- The underpinning theories
- The reservations made about HRM
- Models of HRM
- The position of HRM today

## Introduction – the HRM concept

Human resource management (HRM) is concerned with all aspects of how people are employed and managed in organizations. It covers the activities of 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 well-being and the provision of employee services. It also has an international dimension. As described in Chapter 3, HRM is delivered through the HR architecture of systems and structures, the HR function and, importantly, line management.

The practice of referring to people as resources as if they were any other factor of production is often criticised. Osterby and Coster (1992: 31) argued that: ‘The term “human resources” reduces people to the same category of value as materials, money and technology – all resources, and resources are only valuable to the extent they can be exploited or leveraged into economic value.’ People management is sometimes preferred as an alternative, but in spite of its connotations, HRM is most commonly used.

### **The development of the HRM concept**

The term HRM has largely taken over that of ‘personnel management’, which took over that of ‘labour management’ in the 1940s, which took over that of ‘welfare’ in the 1920s (the latter process emerged in the munitions factories of the First World War). HRM largely replaced the human relations approach to managing people founded by Elton Mayo (1933) who based his beliefs on the outcome of the research project conducted in the 1920s known as the Hawthorne studies. Members of this school believed that productivity was directly related to job satisfaction and that the output of people would be high if someone they respected took an interest in them. HRM also shifted the emphasis away from humanism – the belief held by writers such as Likert (1961) and McGregor (1960)

that human factors are paramount in the study of organizational behaviour and that people should be treated as responsible and progressive beings.

An early reference to human resources was made by Bakke (1966). Later, Armstrong (1977: 13) observed that in an enterprise ‘the key resource is people’. But HRM did not emerge in a fully fledged form until the 1980s through what might be called its founding fathers. These were the US academics Charles Fombrun and his colleagues in the ‘matching model’, and Michael Beer and his colleagues in the ‘Harvard framework’ as described on page 9.

In the UK they were followed by a number of commentators who developed, explained and frequently criticized the concept of human resource management. Legge (2005: 101) commented that: ‘The term [HRM] was taken up by both UK managers (for example, Armstrong, 1987; Fowler, 1987) and UK academics’. Hendry and Pettigrew (1990: 18) stated that HRM was ‘heavily normative from the start: it provided a diagnosis and proposed solutions’. They also mentioned that: ‘What HRM did at this point was to provide a label to wrap around some of the observable changes, while providing a focus for challenging deficiencies – in attitudes, scope, coherence, and direction – of existing personnel management’ (ibid: 20). Armstrong (1987: 31) argued that:

HRM is regarded by some personnel managers as just a set of initials or old wine in new bottles. It could indeed be no more and no less than another name for personnel management, but as usually perceived, at least it has the virtue of emphasising the virtue of treating people as a key resource, the management of which is the direct concern of top management as part of the strategic planning processes of the enterprise. Although there is nothing new in the idea, insufficient attention has been paid to it in many organizations.

However, commentators such as Guest (1987) and Storey (1995) regarded HRM as a substantially different model built on unitarism (employees share the same interests as employers), individualism, high commitment and strategic alignment (integrating HR strategy with the business strategy). It was also claimed that HRM was more holistic than traditional personnel management and that, importantly,

it emphasized the notion that people should be regarded as assets rather than variable costs.

## **The conceptual framework of HRM**

HRM as conceived in the 1980s had a conceptual framework consisting of a philosophy underpinned by a number of theories drawn from the behavioural sciences and from the fields of strategic management, human capital and industrial relations. The HRM philosophy has been heavily criticized by academics as being managerialist and manipulative but this criticism has subsided, perhaps because it became increasingly evident that the term HRM had been adopted as a synonym for what used to be called personnel management. As noted by Storey (2007: 6): ‘In its generic broad and popular sense it [HRM] simply refers to any system of people management.’

## **HRM practice today**

HRM practice is no longer governed by the original philosophy – if it ever was. It is simply what HR people and line managers do. Few references are made to the HRM conceptual framework. This is a pity – an appreciation of the goals, philosophy and underpinning theories of HRM and the various HRM models provides a sound basis for understanding and developing HR practice. But account needs to be taken of the limitations of that philosophy as expressed by the critics of HRM set out later in this chapter.

## **Aim of this chapter**

The aim of this chapter is to remedy this situation. It starts with a selection of definitions (there have been many) and elaborates on these by examining HRM goals. Because the original concept of HRM is best understood in terms of its philosophy and underpinning theories these are dealt with in the next two sections. Reference is then made to the reservations made about HRM but it is noted that while these need to be understood, much of what HRM originally set out to do is still valid. However, as explained in the next section of the chapter, HRM is more diverse than interpretations of the

original concept can lead us to believe. This is illustrated by the various models summarized in this section which provide further insights into the nature of HRM. The chapter ends with an assessment of where the concept of HRM has got to now. Following this analysis the next two chapters explain how in general terms HRM is planned through the processes of strategic HRM and delivered through the HR architecture and system, the HR function and its members, and, importantly, line managers.

## **HRM defined**

Human resource management can be defined as a strategic, integrated and coherent approach to the employment, development and well-being of the people working in organizations. It was defined by Boxall and Purcell (2003: 1) as ‘all those activities associated with the management of employment relationships in the firm’. A later 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 human resource (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.

An earlier list of HR goals was made by Dyer and Holder (1988: 22–28) who analysed them under the headings of contribution (what kind of employee behaviour is expected?), composition (what headcount, staffing ratio and skill mix?), competence (what general level of ability is desired?) and commitment (what level of employee attachment and identification?). Guest (1987) suggested that the four goals of HRM were strategic integration, high commitment, high quality and flexibility. And Boxall (2007: 63) proposed that ‘the mission of HRM is to support the viability of the firm through stabilizing a cost-effective and socially legitimate system of labour management’.

## The philosophy of human resource management

Doubts were expressed by Noon (1992) as to whether HRM was a map, a model or a theory. But it is evident that the original concept could be interpreted as a philosophy for managing people in that it contained a number of general principles and beliefs as to how that should be done. The following explanation of HRM philosophy was made by Legge (1989: 25) whose analysis of a number of HRM models identified the following common themes:

That human resource policies should be integrated with strategic business planning and used to reinforce an appropriate (or change an inappropriate) organizational culture, that human resources are valuable and a source of competitive advantage, that they may be tapped most effectively by mutually consistent policies that promote commitment and which, as a consequence, foster a willingness in employees to act flexibly in the interests of the ‘adaptive organization’s’ pursuit of excellence.

Storey (2001: 7) noted that the beliefs of HRM included the assumptions that it is the human resource that gives competitive edge, that the aim should be to enhance employee commitment, that HR decisions are of strategic importance and that

therefore HR policies should be integrated into the business strategy.

## Underpinning theories of HRM

The original notion of HRM had a strong theoretical base. Guest (1987: 505) commented that: ‘Human resource management appears to lean heavily on theories of commitment and motivation and other ideas derived from the field of organizational behaviour.’ A number of other theories, especially the resource-based view, have contributed to the understanding of purpose and meaning of HRM. These theories are summarized below.

### Commitment

The significance in HRM theory of organizational commitment (the strength of an individual’s identification with, and involvement in, a particular organization) was highlighted in a seminal *Harvard Business Review* article by Richard Walton (1985).

#### Source review

From control to commitment –  
Walton (1985: 77)

Workers respond best – and most creatively – not when they are tightly controlled by management, placed in narrowly defined jobs and treated as an unwelcome necessity, but, instead, when they are given broader responsibilities, encouraged to contribute and helped to take satisfaction in their work. It should come as no surprise that eliciting commitment – and providing the environment in which it can flourish – pays tangible dividends for the individual and for the company.

The traditional concept of organizational commitment resembles the more recent notion of organizational engagement (see Chapter 15).



## **Motivation**

Motivation theory explains the factors that affect goal-directed behaviour and therefore influences the approaches used in HRM to enhance engagement (the situation in which people are committed to their work and the organization and are motivated to achieve high levels of performance).

## **The resource-based view**

Resource-based theory expressed as ‘the resource-based view’ states that competitive advantage is achieved if a firm’s resources are valuable, rare and costly to imitate. It is claimed that HRM can play a major part in ensuring that the firm’s human resources meet these criteria.

## **Organizational behaviour theory**

Organizational behaviour theory describes how people within their organizations act individually or in groups and how organizations function in terms of their structure, processes and culture. It therefore influences HRM approaches to organization design and development and enhancing organizational capability (the capacity of an organization to function effectively in order to achieve desired results).

## **Contingency theory**

Contingency theory states that HRM practices are dependent on the organization’s environment and circumstances. This means that, as Paauwe (2004: 36) explained: ‘The relationship between the relevant independent variables (eg HRM policies and practices) and the dependent variable (performance) will vary according to the influences such as company size, age and technology, capital intensity, degree of unionization, industry/sector ownership and location.’

Contingency theory is associated with the notion of fit – the need to achieve congruence between an organization’s HR strategies, policies and practices and its business strategies within the context of its external and internal environment. This is a key concept in strategic HRM.

## **Institutional theory**

Organizations conform to internal and external environmental pressures in order to gain legitimacy and acceptance.

## **Human capital theory**

Human capital theory is concerned with how people in an organization contribute their knowledge, skills and abilities to enhancing organizational capability and the significance of that contribution.

## **Resource dependence theory**

Resource dependence theory states that groups and organizations gain power over each other by controlling valued resources. HRM activities are assumed to reflect the distribution of power in the system.

## **AMO theory**

The ‘AMO’ formula as set out by Boxall and Purcell (2003) states that performance is a function of Ability + Motivation + Opportunity to Participate. HRM practices therefore impact on individual performance if they encourage discretionary effort, develop skills and provide people with the opportunity to perform. The formula provides the basis for developing HR systems that attend to employees’ interests, namely their skill requirements, motivations and the quality of their job.

## **Social exchange theory**

Employees will reciprocate their contribution to the organization if they perceive that the organization has treated them well.

## **Transaction costs theory**

Transaction costs economics assumes that businesses develop organizational structures and systems that economize the costs of the transactions (interrelated exchange activities) that take place during the course of their operations.

## Agency theory

Agency theory states that the role of the managers of a business is to act on behalf of the owners of the business as their agents. But there is a separation between the owners (the principals) and the agents (the managers) and the principals may not have complete control over their agents. The latter may therefore act in ways that are against the interests of those principals. Agency theory indicates that it is desirable to operate a system of incentives for agents, ie directors or managers, to motivate and reward acceptable behaviour.

## Reservations about the original concept of HRM

On the face of it, the original concept of HRM as described above had much to offer, at least to management. But for some time, HRM was a controversial topic, especially in academic circles. The main reservations as set out below have been that HRM promises more than it delivers and that its morality is suspect:

- Guest (1991: 149) referred to the ‘optimistic but ambiguous label of human resource management’.
- HRM ‘remains an uncertain and imprecise notion’ Noon (1992: 16).
- ‘The HRM rhetoric presents it as an all or nothing process which is ideal for any organization, despite the evidence that different business environments require different approaches’. (Armstrong, 2000: 577)
- HRM is simplistic – as Fowler (1987: 3) wrote: ‘The HRM message to top management tends to be beguilingly simple. Don’t bother too much about the content or techniques of personnel management, it says. Just manage the context. Get out from behind your desk, bypass the hierarchy, and go and talk to people. That way you will unlock an enormous potential for improved performance.’
- The unitarist approach to industrial relations implicit in HRM (the belief that management and employees share the same concerns and it is therefore in both their interests to work

together) is questionable. Fowler (1987: 3) commented that: ‘At the heart of the concept is the complete identification of employees with the aims and values of the business – employee involvement but on the company’s terms. Power in the HRM system remains very firmly in the hands of the employer. Is it really possible to claim full mutuality when at the end of the day the employer can decide unilaterally to close the company or sell it to someone else?’ Later, Ramsey *et al* (2000: 521) questioned the unitarist assumption underlying much mainstream management theory that claims that everyone benefits from managerial innovation.

- HRM is ‘macho-management dressed up as benevolent paternalism’ Legge (1998: 42).
- HRM is manipulative. Willmott (1993: 534) asserted that: ‘any (corporate) practice/value is as good as any other so long as it secures the compliance of employees’. HRM was dubbed by the Labour Research Department (1989: 8) as ‘human resource manipulation’. John Storey (2007: 4) referred to ‘the potential manipulative nature of seeking to shape human behaviour at work’.
- HRM is managerialist. ‘The analysis of employment management has become increasingly myopic and progressively more irrelevant to the daily experience of being employed. While the reasons for this development are immensely complex... it is primarily a consequence of the adoption of the managerialist conception of the discourse of HRM’ (Delbridge and Keenoy, 2010: 813).
- HRM overemphasizes business needs. Kegan and Francis (2010) have rightly criticized the increasing focus on the business partnership role of HR at the expense of its function as an employee champion. An illustration of this is provided by the Professional Map produced by the British Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD), which as stated by the CIPD (2013: 2): ‘Sets out standards for HR professionals around the world: the activities, knowledge and behaviours needed for success.’ The map refers to ‘business’ 82 times but to ‘ethics’ only once and ‘ethical’ only twice.

These concerns merit attention, but the more important messages conveyed by the original notion of HRM such as the need for strategic integration, the treatment of employees as assets rather than costs, the desirability of gaining commitment, the virtues of partnership and participation and the key role of line managers are still valid and are now generally accepted, and the underpinning theories are as relevant today as they ever were.

And it should be remembered that these objections, with the exception of the last one, mainly apply to the original concept of HRM. But today, as explained in the final section of this chapter, HRM in action does not necessarily conform to this concept as a whole. The practice of HRM is diverse. Dyer and Holder (1988) pointed out that HRM goals vary according to competitive choices, technologies, characteristics of employees (eg could be different for managers) and the state of the labour market. Boxall (2007: 48) referred to ‘the profound diversity’ of HRM and observed that: ‘Human resource management covers a vast array of activities and shows a huge range of variations across occupations, organizational levels, business units, firms, industries and societies.’ There are in fact a number of different models of HRM as described below.

## Models of HRM

The most familiar models defining what HRM is and how it operates are as follows.

### **The matching model of HRM**

Fombrun *et al* (1984) proposed the ‘matching model’, which indicated that HR systems and the organization structure should be managed in a way that is congruent with organizational strategy. This point was made in their classic statement that: ‘The critical management task is to align the formal structure and human resource systems so that they drive the strategic objectives of the organization’ (ibid: 37). Thus they took the first steps towards the concept of strategic HRM.

### **The Harvard model of HRM**

Beer *et al* (1984) produced what has become known as the ‘Harvard framework’. They started with the

proposition that: ‘Human resource management (HRM) involves all management decisions and actions that affect the nature of the relationship between the organization and employees – its human resources’ (ibid: 1). They believed that: ‘Today... many pressures are demanding a broader, more comprehensive and more strategic perspective with regard to the organization’s human resources’ (ibid: 4). They also stressed that it was necessary to adopt ‘a longer-term perspective in managing people and consideration of people as a potential asset rather than merely a variable cost’ (ibid: 6). 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; 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.

### **Contextual model of HRM**

The contextual model of HRM emphasizes the importance of environmental factors by including variables such as the influence of social, institutional and political forces that have been underestimated in other models. The latter, at best, consider the context as a contingency variable. The contextual approach is broader, integrating the human resource management system in the environment in which it is developed. According to Martin-Alcázar *et al* (2005: 638): ‘Context both conditions and is conditioned by the HRM strategy.’ A broader set of stakeholders is involved in the formulation and implementation of human resource strategies that is referred to by Schuler and Jackson (2000: 229) as a ‘multiple stakeholder framework’. These stakeholders may be external as well as internal and both influence and are influenced by strategic decisions

### **The 5-P model of HRM**

As formulated by Schuler (1992) the 5-P model of HRM describes how HRM operates under the five headings of:

- 1 HR philosophy – a statement of how the organization regards its human resources,

the role they play in the overall success of the business, and how they should be treated and managed.

- 2 HR policies – these provide guidelines for action on people-related business issues and for the development of HR programmes and practices based on strategic needs.
- 3 HR programmes – these are shaped by HR policies and consist of coordinated HR efforts intended to initiate and manage organizational change efforts prompted by strategic business needs.
- 4 HR practices – these are the activities carried out in implementing HR policies and programmes. They include resourcing, learning and development, performance and reward management, employee relations and administration.
- 5 HR processes – these are the formal procedures and methods used to put HR strategic plans and policies into effect.

## European model of HRM

Brewster (1993) described a European model of HRM as follows:

- *environment* – established legal framework;
- *objectives* – organizational objectives and social concern – people as a key resource;
- *focus* – cost/benefits analysis, also environment;
- *relationship with employees* – union and non-union;
- *relationship with line managers* – specialist/line liaison;
- *role of HR specialist* – specialist managers – ambiguity, tolerance, flexibility.

The main distinction between this model and what Brewster referred to as ‘the prescribed model’ was that the latter involves deregulation (no legal framework), no trade unions and a focus on organizational objectives but not on social concern.

As set out by Mabey *et al* (1998: 107) the characteristics of the European model are:

- dialogue between social partners;
- emphasis on social responsibility;

- multicultural organizations;
- participation in decision-making;
- continuous learning.

## The hard and soft HRM models

Storey (1989: 8) distinguished between the ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ versions of HRM. He wrote that: ‘The hard one emphasises the quantitative, calculative and business-strategic aspects of managing human resources in as “rational” a way as for any other economic factor. By contrast, the soft version traces its roots to the human-relations school; it emphasizes communication, motivation and leadership.’

However, it was pointed out by Keenoy (1997: 838) that ‘hard and soft HRM are complementary rather than mutually exclusive practices’. Research in eight UK organizations by Truss *et al* (1997) indicated that the distinction between hard and soft HRM was not as precise as some commentators have implied. Their conclusions were as follows.

### Source review

Conclusions on hard and soft models of HRM – Truss *et al* (1997: 70)

Even if the rhetoric of HRM is ‘soft’, the reality is almost always ‘hard’, with the interests of the organization prevailing over those of the individual. In all the organizations, we found a mixture of both hard and soft approaches. The precise ingredients of this mixture were unique to each organization, which implies that factors such as the external and internal environment of the organization, its strategy, culture and structure all have a vital role to play in the way in which HRM operates.

## HRM today

As a description of people management activities in organizations the term HRM is here to stay,

even if it is applied diversely or only used as a label to describe traditional personnel management practices. Emphasis is now placed on the need for HR to be strategic and businesslike and to add value, ie to generate extra value (benefit to the business) by the expenditure of effort, time and money on HRM activities. There have been plenty of new interests, concepts and developments, including human capital management, engagement, talent management, competency-based HRM, e-HRM, high performance work systems, and performance and reward management. But these have not been introduced under the banner of the HRM concept as originally defined.

HRM has largely become something that organizations do rather than an aspiration or a philosophy and the term is generally in use as a way of describing the process of managing people. A convincing summary of what HRM means today, which focuses on what HRM is rather than on its philosophy, was provided by Peter Boxall, John Purcell and Patrick Wright (2007), representing the new generation of commentators.

### Source review

The meaning of HRM – Boxall *et al* (2007: 1)

Human resource management (HRM), the management of work and people towards desired ends, is a fundamental activity in any organization in which human beings are employed. It is not something whose existence needs to be radically justified: HRM is an inevitable consequence of starting and growing an organization. While there are a myriad of variations in the ideologies, styles, and managerial resources engaged, HRM happens in some form or other. It is one thing to question the *relative* performance of particular models of HRM in particular contexts... It is quite another thing to question the necessity of the HRM process itself, as if organizations cannot survive or grow without making a reasonable attempt at organizing work and managing people.

### Key learning points: The essence of human resource management

#### HRM defined

Human resource management (HRM) is concerned with all aspects of how people are employed and managed in organizations.

#### Goals of HRM

The goals of HRM are to:

- support the organization in achieving its objectives by developing and implementing human resource (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.

#### Philosophy of HRM

The beliefs of HRM included the assumptions that it is the human resource that gives competitive edge, that the aim should be to enhance employee commitment, that HR decisions are of strategic importance and that therefore HR policies should be integrated into the business strategy (Storey, 2001: 7).

#### Underpinning theories

'Human resource management appears to lean heavily on theories of commitment and motivation and other ideas derived from the field of organizational behaviour' (Guest, 1987: 505).

### The diversity of HRM

Many HRM models exist, and practices within different organizations are diverse, often only corresponding to the conceptual version of HRM in a few respects.

### Reservations about HRM

On the face of it, the concept of HRM has much to offer, at least to management. But reservations have

been expressed about it. There may be something in these criticisms, but the fact remains that as a description of people management activities in organizations HRM is here to stay, even if it is applied diversely or only used as a label to describe traditional personnel management practices.

## Questions

- 1 What is HRM?
- 2 What was the main message of the Harvard framework?
- 3 What was the main message of the matching model?
- 4 What are the goals of HRM?
- 5 What is the difference between hard and soft HRM?
- 6 What is the essence of the philosophy of HRM?
- 7 What is resource-based theory?
- 8 What is the significance of contingency theory?
- 9 What are the key reservations made by commentators about the early version of HRM?
- 10 What is the position of HRM today?

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# 02

## Strategic HRM

### KEY CONCEPTS AND TERMS

Best fit	High-performance management
Best practice	High-performance work system
Bundling	Human resource advantage
Business model	Life cycle model
Business model innovation	Resource-based view
Competency framework	Resource dependence theory
Competitive advantage	Strategic configuration
Configuration	Strategic fit
Contingent determinism	Strategic HRM
High-commitment management	Strategic management
High-involvement management	Strategy

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

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On completing this chapter you should be able to define these key concepts. You should also understand:

- The conceptual basis of strategic HRM
- The fundamental characteristics of strategy
- How strategy is formulated
- The aims of strategic HRM
- The resource-based view and its implications
- The meaning of strategic fit
- The three HRM ‘perspectives’ of Delery and Doty
- The significance of bundling
- The significance of the concepts of ‘best practice’ and ‘best fit’
- The significant features of strategic HRM
- The content and formulation of HR strategies

## Introduction

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Strategic human resource management (strategic HRM or SHRM) is an approach to the development and implementation of HR strategies that are integrated with business strategies and support their achievement. SHRM has been described by Boxall (1996) as the interface between HRM and strategic management. Schuler and Jackson (2007: 5) stated that SHRM is fundamentally about ‘systematically linking people with the firm’.

Baird and Meshoulam (1988: 116) pointed out that: ‘Business objectives are accomplished when human resource practices, procedures and systems are developed and implemented based on organizational needs, that is, when a strategic perspective to human resource management is adopted.’ Wright and McMahan (1992: 295) explained that the field of HRM has ‘sought to become integrated with the strategic management process through the development of a new discipline referred to as strategic human resource management’.

In essence, strategic HRM is conceptual; it is a general notion of how integration or ‘fit’ between HR and business strategies is achieved, the benefits of taking a longer-term view of where HR should be going and how to get there, and how coherent and mutually supporting HR strategies should be developed and implemented. Importantly, it is also about how members of the HR function should adopt a strategic approach on a day-to-day basis. This means that they operate as part of the management team, ensure that HR activities support the achievement of business strategies on a continuous basis and add value.

The aim of this chapter is to explore what this involves. It starts with an analysis of the meaning of SHRM. It then covers: an examination of its nature and its aims; an analysis of its underpinning concepts – the resource-based view and strategic fit. This is followed by a description of how strategic HRM works, namely the universalistic, contingency and configurational perspectives defined by Delery and Doty (1996) and the three approaches associated with those perspectives – best practice, best fit and bundling. The chapter continues with a summary of the distinctive features of strategic HRM and ends with an examination of how HR strategies are developed and implemented when an SHRM approach is adopted.

## The conceptual basis of strategic HRM

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Strategic HRM takes the notion of HRM as a strategic, integrated and coherent process and associates it with an approach to management that involves adopting a broad and long-term view of where the business is going and managing it in ways that ensure that this strategic thrust is maintained. It is influenced by the concepts of strategic management and strategy.

### **Strategic management**

According to Boxall and Purcell (2003: 44): ‘Strategic management is best defined as a process. It is a process of strategy making, of forming and, if the firm survives, reforming its strategy over time.’ Strategic management was described by Johnson *et al* (2005: 6) as ‘understanding the strategic position of an organization, making strategic choices for the future, and turning strategy into action’. The purpose of strategic management has been expressed by Kanter (1984: 288) as being to ‘elicit the present actions for the future’ and become ‘action vehicles – integrating and institutionalizing mechanisms for change’ (ibid: 301).

The key strategic management activity identified by Thompson and Strickland (1996: 3) is ‘deciding what business the company will be in and forming a strategic vision of where the organization needs to be headed – in effect, infusing the organization with a sense of purpose, providing long-term direction, and establishing a clear mission to be accomplished.’

The focus is on identifying the organization’s mission and strategies, but attention is also given to the resource base required to make it succeed. Managers who think strategically will have a broad and long-term view of where they are going. But they will also be aware that they are responsible, first, for planning how to allocate resources to opportunities that contribute to the implementation of strategy, and second, for managing these opportunities in ways that will add value to the results achieved by the firm.

### **The concept of strategy**

Strategy is the approach selected to achieve specified goals in the future. As defined by Chandler (1962:

13) it is: ‘The determination of the long-term goals and objectives of an enterprise, and the adoption of courses of action and the allocation of resources necessary for carrying out those goals.’ The formulation and implementation of corporate strategy is a process for developing a sense of direction, making the best use of resources and ensuring strategic fit.

Strategy has three fundamental characteristics. First, it is forward looking. It is about deciding where you want to go and how you mean to get there. It is concerned with both ends and means. In this sense a strategy is a declaration of intent: ‘This is what we want to do and this is how we intend to do it.’ Strategies define longer-term goals but they also cover how those goals will be attained. They guide purposeful action to deliver the required result. A good strategy is one that works, one that in Abell’s (1993: 1) phrase enables organizations to adapt by ‘mastering the present and pre-empting the future’. As Boxall (1996: 70) explained: ‘Strategy should be understood as a framework of critical ends and means.’

The second characteristic of strategy is the recognition that the organizational capability of a firm (its capacity to function effectively) depends on its resource capability (the quality and quantity of its resources and their potential to deliver results). This is the resource-based view as described later in this chapter.

The third characteristic of strategy is that it aims to achieve strategic fit – the need when developing functional strategies such as HR to achieve congruence between them and the organization’s business strategies within the context of its external and internal environment.

## Implementation of strategy

‘Implementation entails converting the strategic plan into action and then into results’ (Thompson and Strickland, 1996: 20). Dreaming up a strategy is fairly easy; getting it to work is hard. Kanter (1984: 305) noted that: ‘Many companies, even very sophisticated ones, are much better at generating impressive plans on paper than they are at getting “ownership” of the plans so that they actually guide operational decisions.’

## Critical evaluation of the concept of strategy

The development of corporate strategy is often assumed to be a logical, step-by-step affair, the outcome of which is a formal written statement that provides a definitive guide to the organization’s intentions. Many people still believe and act as if this were the case, but it is a misrepresentation of reality. In practice, the formulation of strategy may not be as rational and linear a process as some writers describe it or as some managers attempt to make it. There are limitations to the totally logical model of management that underpins the concept of strategic human resource management. In the words of Mabey *et al* (1998: 74): ‘The reality is... that strategies may not always be easy to discern, that the processes of decision-making may be implicit, incremental, negotiated and compromised.’

Sparrow *et al* (2010: 4) asserted succinctly that: ‘Strategy is not rational and never has been.’ Strategy formulation can best be described as ‘problem solving in unstructured situations’ (Digman, 1990: 53) and strategies will always be formed under conditions of partial ignorance. Quinn (1980: 9) stated that a strategy may simply be ‘a widely held understanding resulting from a stream of decisions’. He believed that strategy formulation takes place by means of ‘logical incrementalism’, ie it evolves in several steps rather than being conceived as a whole. Pettigrew and Whipp (1991: 26) observed that: ‘strategy does not move forward in a direct linear way, nor through easily discernable sequential phases. Quite the reverse; the pattern is much more appropriately seen as continuous, iterative and uncertain.’

Another difficulty is that strategies are often based on the questionable assumption that the future will resemble the past. Some years ago, Heller (1972: 150) had a go at the cult of long-range planning: ‘What goes wrong’ he wrote, ‘is that sensible anticipation gets converted into foolish numbers: and their validity always hinges on large loose assumptions.’ Faulkner and Johnson (1992: 17–18) said of long-term planning that it:

was inclined to take a definitive view of the future, and to extrapolate trend lines for the key business variables in order to arrive at this view. Economic turbulence was insufficiently considered, and the reality that much strategy is formulated and

implemented in the act of managing the enterprise was ignored. Precise forecasts ending with derived financials were constructed, the only weakness of which was that the future almost invariably turned out differently.

Strategy formulation is not necessarily a deterministic, rational and continuous process, as was emphasized by Mintzberg (1987). He noted that, rather than being consciously and systematically developed, strategy reorientation happens in what he calls brief ‘quantum loops’. A strategy, according to Mintzberg, can be deliberate – it can realize the intentions of senior management, for example to attack and conquer a new market. But this is not always the case. In theory, he says, strategy is a systematic process: first we think, then we act; we formulate then we implement. But we also ‘act in order to think’. In practice, ‘a realized strategy can emerge in response to an evolving situation’ (ibid: 68) and the strategic planner is often ‘a pattern organizer, a learner if you like, who manages a process in which strategies and visions can emerge as well as be deliberately conceived’ (ibid: 73). This concept of ‘emergent strategy’ conveys the essence of how in practice organizations develop their business and HR strategies.

Boxall and Purcell (2003: 34) suggested that ‘it is better if we understand the strategies of firms as sets of strategic choices some of which may stem from planning exercises and set-piece debates in senior management, and some of which may emerge in a stream of action’. Research conducted by Tyson (1997: 280) confirmed that, realistically, strategy:

- has always been emergent and flexible – it is always ‘about to be’, it never exists at the present time;
- is not only realized by formal statements but also comes about by actions and reactions;
- is a description of a future-oriented action that is always directed towards change;
- is conditioned by the management process itself.

## The nature of strategic HRM

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Strategic HRM is an approach that defines how the organization’s goals will be achieved through people

by means of HR strategies and integrated HR policies and practices. It was defined by Mabey *et al* (1998: 25) as the process of ‘developing corporate capability to deliver new organizational strategies’. It is based on two key ideas, namely the resource-based view and the need for strategic fit, as discussed later in this chapter.

SHRM can be regarded as a mindset underpinned by certain concepts rather than a set of techniques. It provides the foundation for strategic reviews in which analyses of the organizational context and existing HR practices lead to decisions on strategic plans for the development of overall or specific HR strategies. SHRM involves the exercise of strategic choice (which is always there) and the establishment of strategic priorities. It is essentially about the integration of business and HR strategies so that the latter contribute to the achievement of the former.

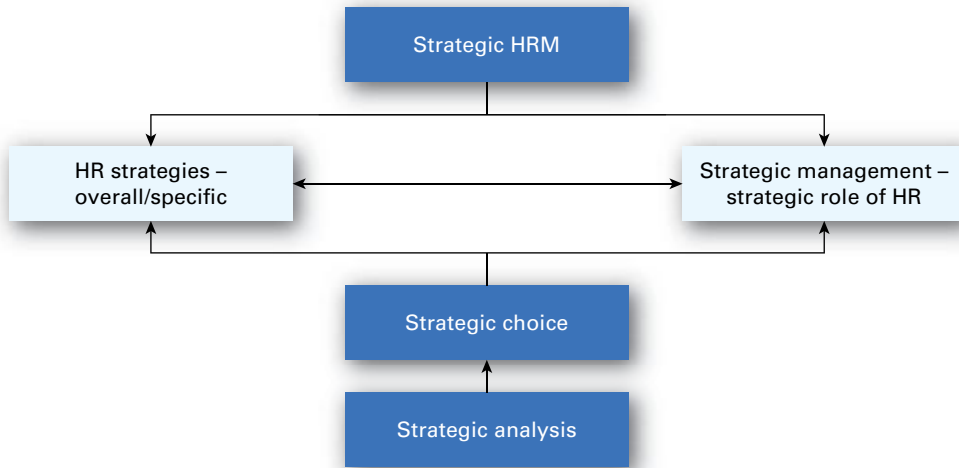
Strategic HRM is not just about strategic planning, nor does it only deal with the formulation of individual HR strategies. Its main concern is with integrating what HR does and plans to do with what the business does and plans to do. As modelled in Figure 2.1, SHRM is about both HR strategies and the strategic management activities of HR professionals.

## Aims of SHRM

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The fundamental aim of strategic HRM is to generate organizational capability by ensuring that the organization has the skilled, engaged, committed and well-motivated employees it needs to achieve sustained competitive advantage. Alvesson (2009: 52) wrote that strategic HRM is about ‘how the employment relationships for all employees can be managed in such a way as to contribute optimally to the organization’s goal achievement’.

SHRM has three main objectives: first to achieve integration – the vertical alignment of HR strategies with business strategies and the horizontal integration of HR strategies. The second objective is to provide a sense of direction in an often turbulent environment so that the business needs of the organization and the individual and the collective needs of its employees can be met by the development and implementation of coherent and practical HR policies and programmes. The third objective

**FIGURE 2.1** Strategic HRM model

is to contribute to the formulation of business strategy by drawing attention to ways in which the business can capitalize on the advantages provided by the strengths of its human resources.

## Critical evaluation of the concept of SHRM

The whole concept of SHRM is predicated on the belief that HR strategies should be integrated with corporate or business strategies. Vertical integration (strategic fit between business and HR strategies) may be desirable but it is not easy to achieve for the following reasons.

### *Diversity of strategic processes, levels and styles*

The different levels at which strategy is formulated and the different styles adopted by organizations may make it difficult to develop a coherent view of what sort of HR strategies will fit the overall strategies and what type of HR contributions are required during the process of formulation.

### *The complexity of the strategy formulation process*

Business strategy formulation and implementation is a complex, interactive process heavily influenced by a variety of contextual and historical factors. In these circumstances, as Guest (1991) has asked, how can there be a straightforward flow from the business strategy to the HR strategy? It has been pointed out by Truss (1999: 44) that the assumption of some matching models of strategic HRM is that there is a simple linear relationship between business strategy and human resource strategy, but this assumption ‘fails to acknowledge the complexities both between and within notions of strategy and human resource management... [It] is based on a rational model of organizations and individuals which takes no account of the significance of power, politics and culture.’

### *The evolutionary nature of business strategy*

The evolutionary and incremental nature of strategy making may make it difficult to pin down the HR

issues that are likely to be relevant. Hendry and Pettigrew (1990) suggest that there are limits to the extent to which rational HR strategies can be drawn up if the process of business strategic planning is itself irrational.

### **The absence of articulated business strategies**

If, because of its evolutionary nature, the business strategy has not been clearly articulated, this would add to the problems of clarifying the business strategic issues that human resource strategies should address.

### **The qualitative nature of HR issues**

Business strategies tend, or at least aim, to be expressed in the common currency of figures and hard data on portfolio management, growth, competitive position, market share, profitability, etc. HR strategies may deal with quantifiable issues such as resourcing and skill acquisition but are equally likely to refer to qualitative factors such as engagement, commitment, motivation, good employee relations and high employment standards. The relationship between the pursuit of policies in these areas and individual and organizational performance may be difficult to establish.

### **Integration with what?**

The concept of SHRM implies that HR strategies must be totally integrated with corporate/business strategies in the sense that they both flow from and contribute to such strategies. But as Brewster (2004) argued, HR strategy will be subjected to considerable external pressure; for example, in Europe, legislation about involvement. These may mean that HR strategies cannot be entirely governed by the corporate/business strategy.

The question: 'To what extent should HR strategy take into account the interests of all the stakeholders in the organization, employees in general as well as owners and management?' also needs to be answered.

## **Conclusions**

The difficulties mentioned above are real, but they are frequently glossed over in rhetorical statements about the need for integration. Too often the outcome is a platitudinous statement such as: 'Our HR strategy is to develop a performance culture' or: 'Our HR strategy is to ensure that the organization has the talented people it needs'. These are perfectly laudable broad objectives but they need to be more specific about how the aims will be achieved and how they will support the achievement of business goals.

Matching HR and business strategies is a problematic process but this doesn't mean that the attempt to do so should be abandoned. HR strategists must make every effort to understand the business model of their organization (ie a picture of an organization that explains how it achieves competitive advantage and makes money) and the plans for business model innovation (the process followed by an organization to develop a new business model or change an existing one). They have to take into account the difficulties mentioned above but they need to overcome these by persistent efforts designed to obtain insight into the real issues facing the organization, leading to plans for practical interventions that address those issues.

## **The resource-based view of SHRM**

To a very large extent, the philosophy of SHRM is underpinned by the resource-based view. This states that it is the range of resources in an organization, including its human resources, that produces its unique character and creates competitive advantage. The resource-based view is founded on the ideas of Penrose (1959: 24–25), who wrote that the firm is 'an administrative organization and a collection of productive resources' and saw resources as 'a bundle of potential services'. It was expanded by Wernerfelt (1984: 172), who explained that strategy 'is a balance between the exploitation of existing resources and the development of new ones'. Resources were defined by Hunt (1991: 322) as 'anything that has an enabling capacity'.



The concept was developed by Barney (1991: 102), who stated that 'a firm is said to have a competitive advantage when it is implementing a value-creating strategy not simultaneously being implemented by any current or potential competitors and when these other firms are unable to duplicate the benefits of this strategy'. This will happen if their resources are valuable, rare, inimitable and non-substitutable. He noted later (Barney 1995: 49) that an environmental analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT analysis) was only half the story: 'A complete understanding of sources of a firm's competitive advantage requires the analysis of a firm's internal strengths and weaknesses as well.' He emphasized that:

Creating sustained competitive advantage depends on the unique resources and capabilities that a firm brings to competition in its environment. To discover these resources and capabilities, managers must look inside their firm for valuable, rare and costly-to-imitate resources, and then exploit these resources through their organization. (ibid: 60)

The following rationale for resource-based strategy was produced by Grant (1991: 13):

The resources and capabilities of a firm are the central considerations in formulating its strategy: they are the primary constants upon which a firm can establish its identity and frame its strategy, and they are the primary sources of the firm's profitability. The key to a resource-based approach to strategy formulation is understanding the relationships between resources, capabilities, competitive advantage and profitability – in particular, an understanding of the mechanisms through which competitive advantage can be sustained over time. This requires the design of strategies which exploit to maximum effect each firm's unique characteristics.

Resource-based SHRM can produce what Boxall and Purcell (2003) referred to as 'human resource advantage'. The aim is to develop strategic capability. This means strategic fit between resources and opportunities, obtaining added value from the effective deployment of resources, and developing managers who can think and plan strategically in the sense that they understand the key strategic issues and ensure that what they do enables the

strategic goals of the business to be achieved. In line with human capital theory, the resource-based view emphasizes that investment in people increases their value to the firm. It proposes that sustainable competitive advantage is attained when the firm has a human resource pool that cannot be imitated or substituted by its rivals.

Boxall (1996: 66) suggested that 'the resource-based view of the firm provides a conceptual basis, if we needed one, for asserting that key human resources are sources of competitive advantage'. He noted that human resource advantage is achieved by a combination of 'human capital advantage', which results from employing people with competitively valuable knowledge and skills, and 'human process advantage', which follows from the establishment of 'difficult to imitate, highly evolved processes within the firm, such as cross-departmental cooperation and executive development'. Accordingly, 'human resource advantage', the superiority of one firm's labour management over another's, can be thought of as the product of its human capital and human process advantages. He also observed (ibid: 66) that the strategic goal emerging from the resource-based view was to 'create firms which are more intelligent and flexible than their competitors' by hiring and developing more talented staff and by extending their skills base. Resource-based strategy is therefore concerned with the enhancement of the human or intellectual capital of the firm. As Ulrich (1998: 126) commented: 'Knowledge has become a direct competitive advantage for companies selling ideas and relationships. The challenge to organizations is to ensure that they have the capability to find, assimilate, compensate and retain the talented individuals they need.'

The strategic goal emerging from the resource-based view is to create firms that are more intelligent and flexible than their competitors (Boxall, 1996) by hiring and developing more talented staff and by extending their skills base. Resource-based strategy is therefore concerned with the enhancement of the human or intellectual capital of the firm. Resource dependence theory (Pfeffer and Davis-Blake, 1992) suggests that HR strategies such as those concerned with reward are strongly influenced by the need to attract, retain and energize high-quality people.

## Critical evaluation of the resource-based view

The resource-based view has had considerable influence on thinking about human resource management. It provides a justification for attaching importance to resourcing activities, especially those concerned with talent management. It can also be used to enhance the value of the HR contribution in achieving competitive advantage. But it has the following limitations:

- it may be difficult to find resources that satisfy all the criteria;
- external factors such as product market pressures are ignored;
- it provides only generalized guidance on what resources are suitable;
- different resource configurations can provide the same value for firms;
- as Priem and Butler (2001) pointed out, the theory is tautological because valuable resources and competitive advantage are defined in the same terms.

## Strategic fit

The concept of strategic fit stresses that when developing HR strategies it is necessary to achieve congruence between them and the organization's business strategies within the context of its external and internal environment. This notion is fundamental to SHRM, as was stressed by Wright and Snell (1998: 758) who wrote: 'The primary role of strategic HRM should be to promote a fit with the demands of the competitive environment.' In more detail, Schuler (1992: 18) stated that:

Strategic human resource management is largely about integration and adaptation. Its concern is to ensure that: (1) human resources (HR) management is fully integrated with the strategy and strategic needs of the firm (vertical fit); (2) HR policies cohere both across policy areas and across hierarchies (horizontal fit); and (3) HR practices are adjusted, accepted and used by line managers and employees as part of their everyday work.

## Perspectives on SHRM

Taking into account the concepts of the resource-based view and strategic fit, Delery and Doty (1996: 802) contended that 'organizations adopting a particular strategy require HR practices that are different from those required by organizations adopting different strategies' and that organizations with 'greater congruence between their HR strategies and their (business) strategies should enjoy superior performance' (ibid: 803). They identified three HRM perspectives:

- 1 *The universalistic perspective* – some HR practices are better than others and all organizations should adopt these best practices. There is a universal relationship between individual 'best' practices and firm performance.
- 2 *The contingency perspective* – to be effective an organization's HR policies must be consistent with other aspects of the organization. The primary contingency factor is the organization's strategy. This can be described as 'vertical fit'.
- 3 *The configurational perspective* – this is a holistic approach that emphasizes the importance of the pattern of HR practices and is concerned with how this pattern of independent variables is related to the dependent variable of organizational performance.

This typology provided the basis for what has become the most commonly used classification of approaches, which is to adopt the terms 'best practice' and 'best fit' for the universalistic and contingency perspectives, and 'bundling' as the third approach (Richardson and Thompson, 1999). This followed the classification made by Guest (1997) of fit as an ideal set of practices, fit as contingency and fit as bundles.

## The best practice model

This model is based on the assumption that there is a set of best HRM practices that are universal in the sense that they are best in any situation, and that adopting them will lead to superior organizational performance.



A number of lists of ‘best practices’ have been produced, the most quoted being by Pfeffer (1998):

- employment security;
- selective hiring;
- self-managed teams;
- high compensation contingent on performance;
- training to provide a skilled and motivated workforce;
- reduction of status differentials;
- sharing information.

### The best fit model

The best fit model is in line with contingency theory. It emphasizes that HR strategies should be congruent with the context and circumstances of the organization. ‘Best fit’ can be perceived in terms of vertical integration or alignment between the organization’s business and HR strategies. There are three models: life cycle, competitive strategy and strategic configuration.

### The life cycle model

The life cycle model is based on the theory that the development of a firm takes place in four stages: start-up, growth, maturity and decline. This is in line with product life cycle theory. The basic premise of this model was expressed by Baird and Meshoulam (1988: 117) as follows:

Human resource management’s effectiveness depends on its fit with the organization’s stage of development. As the organization grows and develops, human resource management programmes, practices and procedures must change to meet its needs. Consistent with growth and development models it can be suggested that human resource management develops through a series of stages as the organization becomes more complex.

### Best fit and competitive strategies

Three strategies aimed at achieving competitive advantage were identified by Porter (1985):

- 1 *Innovation* – being the unique producer.
- 2 *Quality* – delivering high-quality goods and services to customers.
- 3 *Cost leadership* – the planned result of policies aimed at ‘managing away’ expense.

It was argued by Schuler and Jackson (1987) that to achieve the maximum effect it is necessary to match the role characteristics of people in an organization with the preferred strategy.

### Strategic configuration

Another approach to best fit is the proposition that organizations will be more effective if they adopt a policy of strategic configuration (Delery and Doty, 1996). This means matching their strategy to one of the ideal types defined by theories such as those produced by Miles and Snow (1978). They identified the following four types of organizations, classifying the first three types as ‘ideal’ organizations:

- 1 *Prospectors*, which operate in an environment characterized by rapid and unpredictable changes. Prospectors have low levels of formalization and specialization and high levels of decentralization. They have relatively few hierarchical levels.
- 2 *Defenders*, which operate in a more stable and predictable environment than prospectors and engage in more long-term planning. They have more mechanistic or bureaucratic structures than prospectors and obtain coordination through formalization, centralization, specialization and vertical differentiation.
- 3 *Analysers*, which are a combination of the prospector and defender types. They operate in stable environments, like defenders, and also in markets where new products are constantly required, like prospectors. They are usually not the initiators of change, like prospectors, but they follow the changes more rapidly than defenders.
- 4 *Reactors*, which are unstable organizations existing in what they believe to be an unpredictable environment. They lack consistent well-articulated strategies and do not undertake long-range planning.

## Critical evaluation of the best practice and best fit models

### The best practice model

The notion of best practice assumes that there are universally effective HR practices that can readily be transferred. This rubric has been attacked by a number of commentators. Cappelli and Crocker-Hefter (1996: 7) commented that the notion of a single set of best practices has been overstated: ‘There are examples in virtually every industry of firms that have very distinctive management practices... Distinctive human resource practices shape the core competencies that determine how firms compete.’

Purcell (1999: 26) noted that ‘the search for best practice tends to take on the flavour of a moral crusade’. He has also criticized the best practice or universalist view by pointing out the inconsistency between a belief in best practice and the resource-based view, which focuses on the intangible assets, including HR, that allow the firm to do better than its competitors. He asked how can ‘the universalism of best practice be squared with the view that only some resources and routines are important and valuable by being rare and imperfectly imitable?’ and stated that: ‘The claim that the bundle of best practice HRM is universally applicable leads us into a utopian cul-de-sac’ (ibid: 36). Boxall (2007: 5) concluded that he was ‘deeply sceptical about claims for universal applicability for particular HRM practices or clusters of practices [but] this does not rule out the search for general principles in the management of work and people’.

However, a knowledge of what is assumed to be best practice can be used to inform decisions on what practices are most likely to fit the needs of the organization, as long as it is understood why a particular practice should be regarded as a best practice and what needs to be done to ensure that it will work in the context of the organization. Becker and Gerhart (1996) argued that the idea of best practice might be more appropriate for identifying the principles underlying the choice of practices, as opposed to the practices themselves.

### The best fit model

The best fit model seems to be more realistic than the best practice model. As Dyer and Holder (1988: 31)

observed: ‘The inescapable conclusion is that what is best depends.’ But there are limitations to the concept. Paauwe (2004: 37) emphasized that: ‘It is necessary to avoid falling into the trap of “contingent determinism” (ie claiming that the context absolutely determines the strategy). There is, or should be, room for making strategic choices.’

There is a danger of mechanistically matching HR policies and practices with strategy. It is not credible to claim that there are single contextual factors that determine HR strategy, and internal fit cannot therefore be complete. Purcell (1999: 35) pointed out that: ‘each firm has to make choices not just on business and operational strategies but on what type of HR system is best for its purposes’. As Boxall (2007: 61) asserted: ‘It is clearly impossible to make all HR policies reflective of a chosen competitive or economic mission.’ They may have to fit with social legitimacy goals. And Purcell (1999: 37) commented that: ‘The search for a contingency or matching model of HRM is also limited by the impossibility of modelling all the contingent variables, the difficulty of showing their interconnection, and the way in which changes in one variable have an impact on others.’

Best fit models tend to be static and don’t take account of the processes of change. They neglect the fact that institutional forces shape HRM – it cannot be assumed that employers are free agents able to make independent decisions.

## Conclusions

It is often said that best fit is better than best practice but this statement can only be accepted with reservations. As Stavrou *et al* (2010: 952–53) argued:

There may be merit in both approaches where the debate is between general principles/bundles (training and development, staffing, compensation and benefits, communication and participation, and planning) and the manner in which they are carried out... It seems that the ‘best fit’ and ‘best practice’ approaches of the HR-performance relationship are not necessarily mutually exclusive. On the contrary, they may be combined to provide a more holistic picture.

This is particularly the case if the term ‘best practice’ is replaced by ‘good practice’, thus avoiding the notion of universality implied by the former term.

For example, the meta-analysis carried out by Schmidt and Hunter (1998) established conclusively that when selecting people, the best levels of predictive validity are achieved by a combination of structured interviews and intelligence tests. But a decision on what sort of structured interview should be adopted and whether or not to use intelligence tests would depend on the situation in which the decision was made.

## Bundling

‘Bundling’ is the development and implementation of several HR practices together so that they are interrelated and therefore complement and reinforce each other. This is the process of horizontal integration, which is also referred to as the use of ‘complementarities’. Richardson and Thompson (1999) suggested that a strategy’s success turns on combining vertical or external fit and horizontal or internal fit. They concluded that a firm with bundles of associated HR practices should have a higher level of performance, provided it also achieves high levels of fit with its competitive strategy.

Dyer and Reeves (1995: 656–57) noted that: ‘The logic in favour of bundling is straightforward... Since employee performance is a function of both ability and motivation, it makes sense to have practices aimed at enhancing both.’ Thus there are several ways in which employees can acquire needed skills (such as careful selection and training) and multiple incentives to enhance motivation (different forms of financial and non-financial rewards). Their study of various models listing HR practices that create a link between HRM and business performance found that the activities appearing in most of the models were involvement, careful selection, extensive training and contingent compensation.

The process of bundling HR strategies is an important aspect of the concept of strategic HRM. In a sense, SHRM is holistic: it is concerned with the organization as a total system or entity and addresses what needs to be done across the organization as a whole. It is not interested in isolated programmes and techniques, or in the ad hoc development of HR strategies and practices.

Bundling can take place in a number of ways. Competency frameworks (a set of definitions of the competencies that describe the types of behaviour required for the successful performance of a role)

can be devised that have a variety of uses, for example to specify recruitment standards, provide a framework for structured interviews, identify learning and development needs and indicate the standards of behaviour or performance required. Job evaluation can also be used to clarify and define levels in an organization. Grade structures can define career ladders in terms of competency requirements (career family structures) and thus provide the basis for learning and development programmes. Total reward approaches ‘bundle’ financial and non-financial rewards together. High-performance systems are in effect based on the principle of bundling because they group a number of HR practices together to produce synergy and thus increase their impact.

## Critical evaluation of bundling

Bundling sounds like a good idea. The research by MacDuffie (1995) and others has shown that bundling can improve performance. But there are a number of inhibiting factors, namely:

- deciding which bundles are likely to be best – there is no evidence that one bundle is generally better than another;
- actually linking practices together – it is always easier to deal with one practice at a time;
- managing the interdependencies between different parts of a bundle;
- convincing top management and line managers that bundling will benefit the organization and them.

These can be overcome by dedicated HR professionals, but it is hard work. What can be done, with difficulty, is to find ways in which different HR practices can support one another, as in the examples given above.

## HR strategies

HR strategies indicate what the organization wants to do about its human resource management policies and practices and how they should be integrated with the business strategy and each other. They set out aspirations that are expressed as intentions,

which are then converted into actions. As suggested by Chesters (2011: 32), they should be regarded as a statement of the organization's collective endeavour. They are not just a laundry list of everything that the organization would like to do.

HR strategies were described by Dyer and Reeves (1995: 656) as 'internally consistent bundles of human resource practices'. Richardson and Thompson (1999: 3) observed that:

A strategy, whether it is an HR strategy or any other kind of management strategy must have two key elements: there must be strategic objectives (ie things the strategy is supposed to achieve), and there must be a plan of action (ie the means by which it is proposed that the objectives will be met).

Purcell (2001: 72) made the point that: 'Strategy in HR, like in other areas, is about continuity and change, about appropriateness in the circumstances, but anticipating when the circumstances change. It is about taking strategic decisions.'

The purpose of HR strategies is to articulate what an organization intends to do about its HRM policies and practices now and in the longer term to ensure that they contribute to the achievement of business objectives. However, it is necessary to bear in mind the dictum of Fombrun *et al* (1984) that business and managers should perform well in the present to succeed in the future.

HR strategies may be defined formally as part of a strategic HRM process that leads to the development of overall or specific strategies for implementation by HR and, vitally, line managers. But an organization that has developed an HR strategy will not be practising SHRM unless that HR strategy has strategic relevance to the organization's success. As Wright and McMahan (1999: 52) indicated, HRM can only be considered to be strategic if 'it enables an organization to achieve its goals'.

Pettigrew and Whipp (1991: 30) emphasized that strategy, 'far from being a straightforward, rational phenomenon, is in fact interpreted by managers according to their own frame of reference, their particular motivations and information'. They were writing about business strategy, but the same applies to HR strategy, which can appear through an emergent, evolutionary and possibly unarticulated process influenced by the business strategy as it develops and changes in the internal and external environment. But there are still strong

arguments for a systematic approach to identifying strategic directions that can provide a framework for decision-making and action. The main argument for articulating HR strategies is that unless you know where you are going, you will not know how to get there or when you have arrived.

Because all organizations are different, all HR strategies are different. There is no such thing as a standard strategy. Research into HR strategy conducted by Armstrong and Long (1994) and Armstrong and Baron (2002) revealed many variations. Some strategies are simply very general declarations of intent. Others go into much more detail. The two types of HR strategies are: 1) general strategies such as high-performance working; 2) specific strategies relating to the different aspects of HRM such as learning and development and reward.

## General HR strategies

General strategies describe the overall system or bundle of complementary HR practices that the organization proposes to adopt or puts into effect in order to improve organizational performance. The three main approaches are summarized below.

### High-performance management

High-performance management aims, through high-performance work systems (bundles of practices that enhance employee performance and facilitate their engagement, motivation and skill enhancement), to make an impact on the performance of the organization in such areas as productivity, quality, levels of customer service, growth and profits. High-performance working practices include rigorous recruitment and selection procedures, extensive and relevant training and management development activities, incentive pay systems and performance management processes.

### High-commitment management

One of the defining characteristics of HRM is its emphasis on the importance of enhancing mutual commitment (Walton, 1985). High-commitment management has been described by Wood (1996) as: 'A form of management which is aimed at eliciting a commitment so that behaviour is primarily self-regulated rather than controlled by sanctions and

pressures external to the individual, and relations within the organization are based on high levels of trust.’

### High-involvement management

As defined by Benson *et al* (2006: 519): ‘High-involvement work practices are a specific set of human resource practices that focus on employee decision-making, power, access to information, training and incentives.’ Camps and Luna-Arocas (2009: 1057) observed that: ‘High-involvement work practices aim to provide employees with the opportunity, skills and motivation to contribute to organizational success in environments demanding greater levels of commitment and involvement.’ The term ‘high-involvement’ was used by Lawler (1986) to describe management systems based on commitment and involvement, as opposed to the old bureaucratic model based on control.

### Examples of general HR strategies

- A local authority: as expressed by the chief executive of this borough council, its HR strategy is about ‘having a very strong focus on the overall effectiveness of the organization, its direction and how it’s performing; there is commitment to, and belief in, and respect for individuals, and I think that these are very important factors.’
  - A public utility: ‘The only HR strategy you really need is the tangible expression of values and the implementation of values... unless you get the human resource values right you can forget all the rest’ (managing director).
  - A manufacturing company: ‘The HR strategy is to stimulate changes on a broad front aimed ultimately at achieving competitive advantage through the efforts of our people. In an industry of fast followers, those who learn quickest will be the winners’ (HR director).
  - A retail stores group: ‘The biggest challenge will be to maintain [our] competitive advantage and to do that we need to maintain and continue to attract very high calibre people. The key differentiator on anything any company does is fundamentally
- the people, and I think that people tend to forget that they are the most important asset. Money is easy to get hold of, good people are not. All we do in terms of training and manpower planning is directly linked to business improvement’ (managing director).

### Specific HR strategies

Specific HR strategies set out what the organization intends to do in areas such as:

- *Human capital management* – obtaining, analysing and reporting on data that informs the direction of value-adding, people management, strategic, investment and operational decisions.
- *Knowledge management* – creating, acquiring, capturing, sharing and using knowledge to enhance learning and performance.
- *Corporate social responsibility* – a commitment to managing the business ethically in order to make a positive impact on society and the environment.
- *Engagement* – the development and implementation of policies designed to increase the level of employees’ engagement with their work and the organization.
- *Organization development* – the planning and implementation of programmes designed to enhance the effectiveness with which an organization functions and responds to change.
- *Resourcing* – attracting and retaining high-quality people.
- *Talent management* – how the organization ensures that it has the talented people it needs to achieve success.
- *Learning and development* – providing an environment in which employees are encouraged to learn and develop.
- *Reward* – defining what the organization wants to do in the longer term to develop and implement reward policies, practices and processes that will further the achievement of its business goals and meet the needs of its stakeholders.

- *Employee relations* – defining the intentions of the organization about what needs to be done and what needs to be changed in the ways in which the organization manages its relationships with employees and their trade unions.
- *Employee well-being* – meeting the needs of employees for a healthy, safe and supportive work environment.

The following are some examples of specific HR strategies.

### The Children's Society

- Implement the rewards strategy of the society to support the corporate plan and secure the recruitment, retention and motivation of staff to deliver its business objectives.
- Manage the development of the human resources information system to secure productivity improvements in administrative processes.
- Introduce improved performance management processes for managers and staff of the society.
- Implement training and development that supports the business objectives of the society and improves the quality of work with children and young people.

### Diageo

There are three broad strands to the *Organization and People Strategy*:

- 1 *Reward and recognition*: use recognition and reward programmes to stimulate outstanding team and individual performance contributions.
- 2 *Talent management*: drive the attraction, retention and professional growth of a deep pool of diverse, talented employees.
- 3 *Organizational effectiveness*: ensure that the business adapts its organization to maximize employee contribution and deliver performance goals.

The strategy provides direction to the company's talent, operational effectiveness and performance and reward agendas. The company's underlying thinking is that the people strategy is not for the human resource function to own but is the responsibility of the whole organization, hence the title 'Organization and People Strategy'.

### A government agency

The key components of the HR strategy are:

- Investing in people – improving the level of intellectual capital.
- Performance management – integrating the values contained in the HR strategy into performance management processes and ensuring that reviews concentrate on how well people are performing those values.
- Job design – a key component concerned with how jobs are designed and how they relate to the whole business.
- The reward system – in developing reward strategies, taking into account that this is a very hard-driven business.

### A local authority

The focus is on the organization of excellence. The strategy is broken down into eight sections: employee relations, recruitment and retention, training, performance management, pay and benefits, health and safety, absence management and equal opportunities.

### Criteria for an effective HR strategy

An effective HR strategy is one that works in the sense that it achieves what it sets out to achieve. Its criteria are that it:

- will satisfy business needs;
- is founded on detailed analysis and study and is evidence-based – it is not just wishful thinking;
- can be turned into actionable programmes that anticipate implementation requirements and problems;



- is coherent and integrated, being composed of components that fit with and support each other;
- takes account of the needs of line managers and employees generally as well as those of the organization and its other stakeholders.

### Formulating HR strategy

Research conducted by Wright *et al* (2004) identified two approaches that can be adopted by HR to strategy formulation: 1) the inside-out approach begins with the status quo HR function (in terms of skills, processes, technologies, etc) and then attempts (with varying degrees of success) to identify linkages to the business (usually through focusing on 'people issues'), making minor adjustments to HR activities along the way; 2) the outside-in approach in which the starting point is the business and the customer, competitor and business issues it faces. The HR strategy then derives directly from these challenges to add real value.

Wright *et al* commented that HR strategies are more likely to flow from business strategies dominated by product/market and financial considerations. But there is still room for HR to make an essential contribution at the stage when business strategies are conceived, for example by focusing on resource issues. This contribution may be more significant when strategy formulation is an emergent or evolutionary process – HR strategic issues will then be dealt with as they arise during the course of formulating and implementing the corporate strategy.

### Implementing HR strategy

As Gratton (2000: 30) commented: 'There is no great strategy, only great execution.' Strategies cannot be left as generalized aspirations or abstractions. But getting strategies into action is not easy: intent does not always lead to action. Too often, strategists act like Charles Dickens's character Mr Pecksmith, who was compared by Dickens (*Martin Chuzzlewit*, Penguin Classics, 2004: 23) to 'a direction-post which is always telling the way to a place and never goes there.' It is necessary to avoid saying, in effect: 'We need to get from here to there but we don't care how.'

If, in Kanter's (1984) phrase, HR strategies are to be action vehicles, they must be translated into HR policies that provide guidelines on decision-making and HR practices that enable the strategy to work. These can be the basis for implementation programmes with clearly stated objectives and deliverables.

To a large extent, HR strategies are implemented by line managers. As Purcell *et al* (2003: *x*) stressed, it is front-line managers who 'bring policies to life'. They pointed out that:

Implementing and enacting policies is the task of line managers. It is necessary first to involve line managers in the development of HR strategy – bearing in mind that things done *with* line managers are much more likely to work than things done *to* line managers. Second, ensure that the HR policies they are expected to put into practice are manageable with the resources available. Third, provide managers with the training, supporting processes and on the spot guidance they need.

## Key learning points: Strategic HRM

### The conceptual basis of strategic HRM

Strategic HRM is the 'interface between HRM and strategic management'. It takes the notion of HRM as a strategic, integrated and coherent approach and develops that in line with the concept of strategic management (Boxall, 1996).

### The fundamental characteristics of strategy

- Forward looking.
- The organizational capability of a firm depends on its resource capability.
- Strategic fit – the need when developing HR strategies to achieve congruence between them and the organization's business strategies within the context of its external and internal environment.

### How strategy is formulated

An emergent and flexible process of developing a sense of direction, making the best use of resources and ensuring strategic fit.

### The aim of SHRM

To generate organizational capability by ensuring that the organization has the skilled, engaged, committed and well-motivated employees it needs to achieve sustained competitive advantage.

### Implications of the resource-based view (RBV)

The RBV emphasizes the importance of creating firms that are 'more intelligent and flexible than their competitors' (Boxall, 1996) by hiring and developing more talented staff and by extending the skills base.

### Implications of the concept of strategic fit

The concept of strategic fit means developing HR strategies that are integrated with the business strategy and support its achievement (vertical integration or fit), and the use of an integrated approach to the development of HR practices.

### Best practice

There is a set of best HRM practices that are universal in the sense that they are best in any situation and adopting them will lead to superior organizational performance. The notion of best practice incorrectly assumes that there are universally effective HR practices that can readily be transferred.

### Best fit

HR strategies should be congruent with the context and circumstances of the organization. More realistic than best practice, but there is a danger of mechanically matching HR policies and practices with strategy.

### The significance of bundling

The process of bundling HR strategies is an important aspect of the concept of SHRM, which is concerned with the organization as a total system or entity and addresses what needs to be done across the organization as a whole.

### HR strategies

HR strategies set out what the organization intends to do about its HRM policies and practices and how they should be integrated with the business strategy and each other. The two types of HR strategies are: 1) general strategies such as high-performance working; 2) specific strategies relating to the different aspects of HRM such as learning and development and reward.



## Questions

- 1 What is strategic HRM?
- 2 What is strategic management?
- 3 What is strategy?
- 4 What is the resource-based view?
- 5 What is the meaning and significance of strategic fit?
- 6 What is the best practice model and to what extent is it valid?
- 7 What is the best fit model and to what extent is it valid?
- 8 What is bundling?
- 9 What are HR strategies?
- 10 What are the criteria for an effective HR strategy?

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## 03

# Delivering HRM – systems and roles

## KEY CONCEPTS AND TERMS

Business partner	Professionalism
Centre of excellence	Shared service centre
HR architecture	Strategic business partner
HR delivery model	The three-legged stool model
HR philosophies, policies, practices	Transactional HR activities
HR system processes and programmes	Transformational HR activities

## LEARNING OUTCOMES

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On completing this chapter you should be able to define these key concepts. You should also understand:

- The framework for delivering HRM
- What the concept of HR architecture means
- What an HR system looks like
- The HR role of line managers
- The role and organization of the HR function
- The nature of an HR delivery model
- The role of HR professionals

## Introduction

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The framework for delivering HRM is provided by the HR architecture of an organization, which consists of the HR system, HR practices and the HR delivery model adopted by the HR function. Within that framework the provision of advice and services relating to human resource management is the responsibility of the HR function and the HR professionals who are members of the function. Ultimately, however, the delivery of HRM is up to line managers who put HR policies into practice.

HR techniques such as organization development, selection testing, talent management, performance management and total reward play an important part in the delivery of HRM. But there is the danger that new and seemingly different techniques become ‘flavours of the month’ only to be quickly forgotten when they fail to deliver. Some time ago McLean (1981: 4) observed that:

The history of the management of human resources is littered with examples of widely acclaimed techniques enthusiastically introduced by managers who are keen to find solutions to their ‘people’ problems, only to be discarded and discredited by the same disillusioned and increasingly cynical managers some time later.

Times have not changed. The effective delivery of HRM depends on using techniques which are tried, tested and appropriate, not ones which have been promoted vigorously as ‘best practice’ without supporting evidence.

## HR architecture

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HR architecture consists of the HR systems, processes and structure, and employee behaviours. It is a comprehensive representation of all that is involved in HRM, not simply the structure of the HR function. As explained by Becker *et al* (2001: 12): ‘We use the term HR architecture to broadly describe the continuum from the HR professionals within the HR function, to the system of HR related policies and practices, through the competencies, motivation and associated behaviours of the firm’s employees.’

It was noted by Hird *et al* (2010: 25) that: ‘this architecture is seen as a unique combination of the HR function’s structure and delivery model, the HR practices and system, and the strategic employee behaviours that these create’.

Purcell (1999: 38) suggested that the focus should be on ‘appropriate HR architecture and the processes that contribute to organizational performance’. Becker and Huselid (2006: 899) stated that: ‘It is the fit between the HR architecture and the strategic capabilities and business processes that implement strategy that is the basis of HR’s contribution to competitive advantage.’

## The HR system

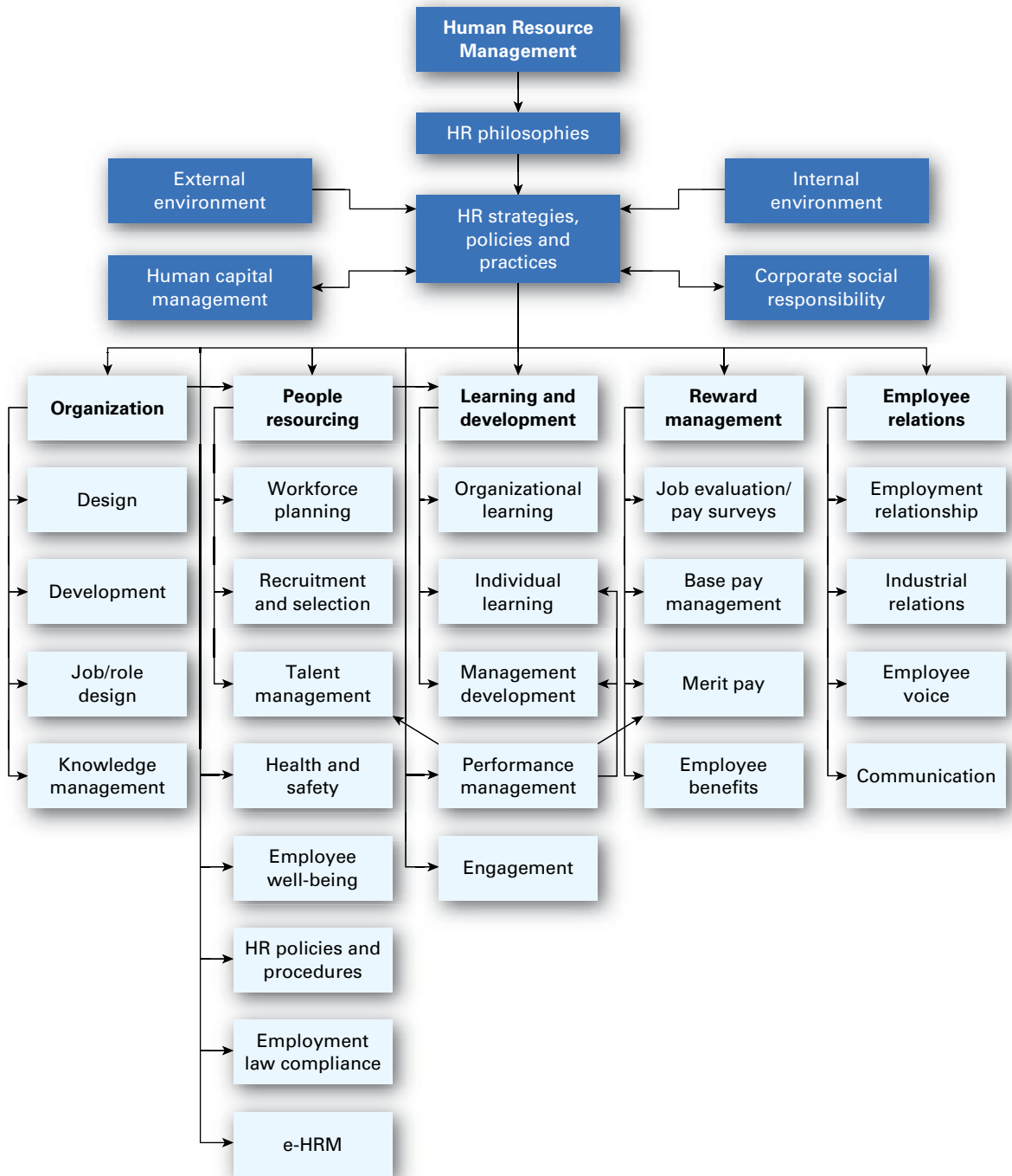
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The HR system contains the interrelated and jointly supportive HR activities and practices which together enable HRM goals to be achieved. Becker and Huselid (1998: 95) observed that: ‘The HRM system is first and foremost a vehicle to implement the firm’s strategy.’ Later (2006) they argued that it is the HR system that is the key HR asset. Boselie *et al* (2005: 73) pointed out that in its traditional form HRM can be viewed as ‘a collection of multiple discrete practices with no explicit or discernible link between them. The more strategically minded system approach views HRM as an integrated and coherent bundle of mutually reinforcing practices.’

As illustrated in Figure 3.1, an HRM system brings together HR philosophies that describe the overarching values and guiding principles adopted in managing people. Taking account of the internal and external environments in which the organization operates, the system incorporates:

- *HR strategies*, which define the direction in which HRM intends to take each of its main areas of activity.
- *HR policies*, which set out what HRM is there to do and provide guidelines defining how specific aspects of HR should be applied and implemented.
- *HR practices*, which consist of the HRM activities involved in managing and developing people and in managing the employment relationship.

**FIGURE 3.1** The HRM system



## The HR function delivery model

In a sense the HR function is in the delivery business – providing the advice and services that enable organizations and their line managers to get things done through people. The HR delivery model describes how those services are provided. These methods of delivery take place irrespective of the degree to which what is done corresponds with the conceptual HRM model described in Chapter 1.

The most celebrated delivery model was produced by Dave Ulrich. In his influential *Harvard Business Review* article (1998: 124) he wrote that: ‘HR should not be defined by what it does but by what it delivers – results that enrich the organization’s value to customers, investors, and employees.’ More specifically he suggested that HR can deliver in four ways: as a strategic partner, an administrative expert, an employee champion and a change agent. This first model was later modified by Ulrich and Brockbank (2005), who defined the four roles as employee advocate, human capital developer, functional expert and strategic partner. The role and organization of the HR function in delivering HRM is explored below.

## The role and organization of the HR function

Members of the HR function provide insight, leadership, advice and services on matters affecting the management, employment, learning and development, reward and well-being of people, and the relationships between management and employees. Importantly, they contribute to the achievement of organizational effectiveness and success (the impact of HRM on performance is considered in Chapter 4).

The basic role of HR is to deliver HRM services. But it does much more than that. It plays a key part in the creation of an environment that enhances engagement by enabling people to make the best use of their capacities, to realize their potential to the benefit of both the organization and themselves, and to achieve satisfaction through their work.

Increasingly, the role of HR is seen to be business-oriented – contributing to the achievement

of sustained competitive advantage. Becker and Huselid (1998: 97) argued that HR should be ‘a resource that solves real business problems’. But one of the issues explored by Francis and Keegan (2006) through their research is the tendency for a focus on business performance outcomes to obscure the importance of employee well-being in its own right. They quoted the view of Ulrich and Brockbank (2005: 201) that ‘caring, listening to, and responding to employees remains a centrepiece of HR work’. The HR function and its members have to be aware of the ethical dimensions of their work (the ethical dimension of HRM is explored in Chapter 8).

### HR activities

HR activities can be divided into two broad categories: 1) transformational (strategic) activities that are concerned with developing organizational effectiveness and the alignment and implementation of HR and business strategies; 2) transactional activities, which cover the main areas of HR service delivery – resourcing, learning and development, reward and employee relations. A CEO’s view on the HR agenda as quoted by Hesketh and Hird (2010: 105) was that it operates on three levels: ‘There’s the foundation level, which we used to call personnel, it’s just pay and rations, recruitment, all that sort of stuff that makes the world go round, transactional work. Level two to me is tools, it could be engagement, reward, development, those sort of things. Level three is the strategic engagement.’

### The organization of the HR function

The ways in which HR operates vary immensely. As Sisson (1990) commented, HR management is not a single homogeneous occupation – it involves a variety of roles and activities that differ from one organization to another and from one level to another in the same organization. Tyson (1987) claimed that the HR function is often ‘balkanized’ – not only is there a variety of roles and activities but these tend to be relatively self-centred, with little passage between them. Hope-Hailey *et al* (1997: 17) believed that HR could be regarded as a ‘chameleon function’ in the sense that the diversity



of practice established by their research suggests that ‘contextual variables dictate different roles for the function and different practices of people management’.

The organization and staffing of the HR function clearly depend on the size of the business, the extent to which operations are decentralized, the type of work carried out, the kind of people employed and the role assigned to the HR function. A survey by Incomes Data Services (IDS, 2010) found that the overall median number of HR staff in the responding organizations was 14: in small and medium-sized companies (with 1–499 staff) the median number was 3.5, and in companies with 500 or more employees it was 20. While, as would be expected, large organizations employed more staff than small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), they had on average fewer HR staff per employee. For SMEs the median ratio of employees to HR staff was 62:1; in large employers it was 95:1. The overall ratio was 80:1. The IRS 2012 survey of HR roles and responsibilities found that the median ratio of employees to HR practitioners was 80:1.

A traditional organization might consist of an HR director responsible directly to the chief executive, with functional heads dealing, respectively, with recruitment and employment matters, learning and development, and reward management. Craill (2006: 15) used the responses from 179 organizations to an IRS survey of the HR function to produce a model of an HR department. He suggested that this ‘might consist of a team of 12 people serving a workforce of around 1,200. The team would have a director, three managers, one supervisor, three HR officers and four assistants. It would include a number of professionally qualified practitioners, particularly at senior level’. However, there is no such thing as a typical HR function, although the ‘three-legged stool’ model as described below has attracted a lot of attention.

### **The three-legged stool model**

The notion of delivering HRM through three major areas – centres of expertise, business partners and HR shared service centres – emerged from the HR delivery model produced by Ulrich (1997, 1998), although, as reported by Hird *et al* (2010: 26): ‘Ulrich himself has gone on record recently to state that the structures being implemented by HR based

on his work are not actually his idea at all but an interpretation of his writing.’ They noted that the first reference to the three-legged stool was in an article by Johnson (1999: 44), two years after Ulrich published his delivery model. In this article Johnson quoted David Hilborn, an associate of William Mercer, management consultants, as follows:

The traditional design [of an HR department] typically includes a vice president of HR, then a manager of compensation and benefits, a manager of HRIS and payroll, a manager of employment and so on. However, the emerging model is more like a three-legged stool. One leg of the stool includes an administrative service centre which processes payroll, benefits and the like and focuses on efficiency in transaction functions. The second leg is a centre of excellence (or expertise) in which managers and specialists work. These employees concentrate on design rather than transactions and will have line managers as their customers. HR business partners make up the third leg. They are generalists who usually report to line managers and indirectly to HR. These employees don’t get involved in transactions, but instead act as consultants and planners, linking the business with appropriate HR programmes.

This exposition provided the blueprint for all subsequent versions of the model, which has evolved as follows:

- *Centres of expertise* – these specialize in the provision of high-level advice and services on key HR activities. The CIPD survey on the changing HR function (CIPD, 2007) found that they existed in 28 per cent of respondents’ organizations. The most common expertise areas were training and development (79 per cent), recruitment (67 per cent), reward (60 per cent) and employee relations (55 per cent).
- *Strategic business partners* – these work with line managers to help them reach their goals through effective strategy formulation and execution. They are often ‘embedded’ in business units or departments.
- *HR shared service centres* – these handle all the routine ‘transactional’ services across the business, which include such activities as recruitment, absence monitoring and advice on dealing with employee issues such as discipline and absenteeism.

## Critical evaluation of the three-legged stool model

Although this model has attracted a great deal of attention, the 2007 CIPD survey found that only 18 per cent of respondents had implemented all three 'legs', although 47 per cent had implemented one or two elements, with business partners being the most common (29 per cent).

Moreover, there are difficulties with the notion. Gratton (2003: 18) pointed out that: 'this fragmentation of the HR function is causing all sorts of unintended problems. Senior managers look at the fragments and are not clear how the function as a whole adds value'. And as Reilly (2007) commented, respondents to the CIPD survey mentioned other problems in introducing the new model. These included difficulties in defining roles and accountabilities, especially those of business partners, who risk being 'hung, drawn and quartered by all sides', according to one HR director. At the same time, the segmented nature of the structure gives rise to 'boundary management' difficulties, for example when it comes to separating out transactional tasks from the work of centres of expertise. The model can also hamper communication between those engaged in different HR activities. Other impediments were technological failure, inadequate resources in HR and skills gaps.

Hird *et al* (2010: 31) drew attention to the following issues:

- An 'off the shelf' introduction of a new HR structure without careful thought as to how the model fits the organization's requirements.
- A lack of care in dealing with the boundary issues between elements of the HR structure which can easily be fragmented.
- A lack of attention to the new skill sets needed by business partners to ensure they can play at the strategic level.
- A lack of understanding on the part of managers as to the value of a new HR structure.
- A lack of skill on the part of line managers to make the required shift to greater responsibility for people issues implied by the new model.
- What is referred to as the 'polo' problem: a lack of provision of the execution of HR services as the business partner shifts to strategic work, and the centre of expertise to an advisory role.

However, some benefits were reported by respondents to the CIPD (2007) survey. Centres of expertise provide higher quality advice. Business partners exercise better business focus, line managers are more engaged, and the profile of HR is raised. Also, the introduction of shared services results in improved customer service and allows other parts of HR to spend more time on value-adding activities. It can also cut costs by reducing the number of HR staff required.

## Dealing with the issues

The following approach incorporating recommendations by Holley (2009: 8–9) can be used to deal with HR structuring issues:

- ensure that top management are behind the changes;
- involve line managers and the whole of HR in planning and implementation;
- work out exactly who will do what in each area – HR and the line – avoid overlaps and ambiguities, taking particular care in defining the respective responsibilities of business partners and members of shared services centres and centres of expertise;
- ensure that the right balance is achieved between HR strategic (transformational) activities and HR service delivery (transactional) activities;
- ensure that the right people are in the right roles (don't simply switch job titles);
- let everyone know about the changes – why they are taking place, how they will work and any differences in responsibilities;
- define the skills required by both HR staff and line managers and help in their development;
- plan the implementation, phasing it as required to avoid any disruption;
- monitor implementation to ensure that it is going according to plan.

## Evaluating the HR function

It is necessary to evaluate the contribution of the HR function to establish how effective it is at both the strategic level and in terms of service delivery and support. The prime criteria for evaluating the work of the function are its ability to operate strategically and its capacity to deliver the levels of services required.

Research conducted by the Institute for Employment Studies (Hirsh, 2008) discovered that the factors that correlated most strongly with line managers' and employees' satisfaction with HR were:

- being well supported in times of change;
- HR giving good advice to employees;
- being well supported when dealing with difficult people or situations;
- HR getting the basics right.

But the results showed that HR could do better in each of these areas. The conclusions reached were

that HR must find out what its customers need and what their experiences of HR services are. HR has to be responsive – clear about what it is there for and what services it offers, and easy to contact.

The IRS 2012 survey of HR roles and responsibilities established that the main measures used by respondents to assess HR effectiveness were:

- absence management data – 79 per cent;
- staff turnover data – 75 per cent;
- exit interview feedback – 66 per cent;
- discipline and grievance data – 60 per cent;
- results of employee surveys – 60 per cent;
- anecdotal/informal feedback – 59 per cent;
- number of tribunal cases – 50 per cent;
- benchmarking – 47 per cent;
- spending against budget – 46 per cent;
- time-to-fill vacancies data – 34 per cent;
- cost per hire – 30 per cent.

## CASE STUDIES ON THE ORGANIZATION OF THE HR FUNCTION

### HR organization at the National Australia Bank Group

HR at the National Australia Bank Group has a number of centres of expertise, business partners, solutions consultants, project managers, a shared services centre, and telephone advisory service for employees (the people advisory helpline).

#### Centres of expertise

Centres of expertise cover areas such as reward, employment policy, talent management, culture management, diversity and performance. The staff in the centres are specialists in their respective fields, while the other parts of HR can be found in the HR service centre, with the exception of recruitment, which is conducted by line managers.

#### Business partners

Business partners attend business unit leadership team meetings and set the company's people strategies and deliver the HR requirements emerging from various projects.

They tend to work in the areas of talent, performance, leadership, diversity and culture and their job is to facilitate the implementation of corporate people initiatives with the relevant specialist HR partners. Unlike shared services staff, they only get involved in HR's daily operational matters if projects escalate and extra help is required.

#### Solutions consultants

Solutions consultants deal with operational queries referred to them from the people advisory helpline – mainly issues of case management and other more complex enquiries. They are a key point of contact for people leaders on matters of policy and procedure, although they do participate in some transaction work as well.

#### Project staff

Project staff work on projects that emerge from strategic discussions.

## The HR shared services model at PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC)

The HR shared services model at PwC consists of transactional and professional areas. Transactional functions include payroll, benefits administration and the joiners/leavers process department. The transactional functions also provide services for their professional counterparts. In contrast, professional areas organized into centres of expertise include functions such as recruitment, learning and development, reward, diversity, and legal and advisory.

The centres of expertise sit within the central human capital services centre but there are definite lines between them. Every centre of expertise is a cost centre, but for the

annual budgeting process all are looked at together as part of the HR shared services function.

The result of introducing the centres of expertise has been that specialist knowledge is now organized into discrete units enabling know-how and experience to be more easily shared. The new structure means there is less duplication and the improved efficiencies allow more time to be dedicated to strategic issues. Additionally, a decrease in costs has been achieved via a combination of reductions in headcount, economies of scale and related efficiencies.

## Reorganizing HR in the Greater Manchester Fire Service

Following major changes in operations, it was decided by senior management that the role of the fire service's HR function was to provide high-level, strategic advice from advisers who could work closely with them, backed up by specialists. In other words, a business partner model. So the brigade began to recruit business partners – placing a special emphasis on those with expertise in employee relations – and specialists to cover areas such as occupational health, equality and diversity, reward, pensions and recruitment. Finding candidates with sufficient gravitas to act as top-level strategic advisers was difficult. There weren't many true business partners about. A lot of people calling themselves business partners were really HR advisers.

When the team was in place the major developments were:

- to introduce a more transparent promotions process;
- to work on the organizational climate and leadership – a series of away-days for leaders using organizational climate tools such as 360-degree feedback and the Belbin Team Inventory;
- the recruitment process was also modernized by putting together a resourcing team, building a microsite and developing an applicant tracking system;
- to reorganize training;
- a departmental competency framework was put in place to ensure HR staff would be able to move easily within the organization rather than becoming bogged down in specialist areas.

## The roles of HR professionals

The roles of HR professionals vary widely according to the extent to which they are generalist (eg HR director, HR manager, HR officer), or specialist (eg head of learning and development, head of talent management, head of reward), the level at which they work (strategic, executive or administrative) the needs of the organization, the view of senior management about their contribution, the context within which they work and their own capabilities. They can act as strategists, business partners, innovators, change agents, internal consultants, facilitators

and coaches. Tyson and Fell (1986: 7) believed that they were 'specialists in managing the employment relationship'. The competencies required are demanding. The various roles are described below.

### *The general role*

The CIPD Profession Map (2013: 9) stated that the HR profession is 'an applied business discipline with a people and organization specialism'. Research conducted by the CIPD in 2010 emphasized the need for HR professionals to be 'insight-led'. Sears (2011: 35) reported that the researchers 'found that

demonstrating a sense of purpose that spans the whole pyramid demands a wide-awake HR function, with a deep understanding of business, contextual and organizational factors.

HR professionals can play a proactive role, contributing to the formulation of corporate strategy, developing integrated HR strategies and volunteering guidance on matters related to upholding core values and ethical principles. They help to improve organizational capability – the capacity of the organization to perform effectively and thus reach its goals and work with line managers to deliver performance targets. As described later in this chapter, their role in dealing with people issues can be strategic or innovative and they can act as change agents. They can also be regarded as facilitators; in the words of Tyson and Fell (1986: 65): ‘Their work allows other managerial work to happen.’ But HR professionals are very much concerned with service delivery which, as a basic responsibility of the HR function, is discussed first below.

### The service delivery role

The service delivery role of HR professionals operates at a transformational level when HR strategies, programmes and policies are devised and implemented which further the achievement of business goals and help to meet the needs of employees. But for many HR people the emphasis is on transactional activities such as recruitment, training, handling day-to-day employment matters and dealing with employment law matters. The latter is one of the most demanding and time-consuming areas in which they give advice and provide services. A 2002 survey by the CIPD found that two thirds of HR specialists were spending in excess of 20 per cent of their time coping with employment law issues, while a quarter reported that over 40 per cent of their working days were being spent in this way.

For many HR practitioners service delivery is what they do. The importance of this aspect of their work should not be underestimated by focusing too much on strategic or business partner roles. Line managers tend to judge HR professionals on the quality and efficiency of the services they provide, such as recruitment, training and solving people problems, rather than on their strategic capabilities.

### The strategic role

HR professionals have a strategic role when they are operating at a transformational (strategic) level as HR directors or heads of the HR function, heads of centres of expertise or key HR functions, and strategic business partners. The strategic HRM skills and knowledge they need to carry out this role are described in Chapter 44. At a transactional level (as an HR officer, adviser or assistant delivering basic HR services such as recruitment or training, or working in an HR shared service centre) their role is not primarily strategic but they can make a contribution to the formulation and implementation of HR strategy.

### Strategic level roles

The roles of HR professionals at a strategic level are:

- To formulate and implement, in conjunction with their management colleagues, forward-looking HR strategies that are based on insights into the needs of the organization, aligned to business objectives and integrated with one another. In doing so they adopt an ‘outside-in’ approach as described by Wright *et al* (2004) in which the starting point is the business, including the customer, competitor and business issues it faces. The HR strategy then derives directly from these challenges in order to create real solutions and add real value.
- To contribute to the development of business strategies. They do this by advising on how the business can achieve its strategic goals by making the best use of its human resources and by demonstrating the particular contribution that can be made by the talented people it employs.
- To work alongside their line management colleagues and provide on an everyday basis continuous support to the implementation of the business or operational strategy of the organization, function or unit.

### The strategic contribution of HR advisers or assistants

The role of HR advisers or assistants is primarily that of delivering effective HR services within their

function, or as a member of an HR service centre. While they will not be responsible for the formulation of HR strategies they may contribute to them within their own speciality. They will need to understand the business goals of the departments or managers for whom they provide services in order to ensure that these services support the achievement of those goals.

### **The business partner role**

The notion of HR professionals as business partners has seized the imagination of HR people. In essence, the concept is that, as business partners, HR specialists share responsibility with their line management colleagues for the success of the enterprise and get involved with them in implementing business strategy and running the business.

As business partners, HR practitioners work closely with their line management colleagues. They are aware of business strategies and the opportunities and threats facing the organization. They are capable of analysing organizational strengths and weaknesses and diagnosing the issues facing the enterprise and their human resource implications. They understand the business model and know about the critical success factors that will create competitive advantage. They adopt a 'value-added' approach when making a convincing business case for innovations.

The term 'value added' looms large in the concept of the HR business partner. In the language of accounting, where the phrase originated, added value is defined as the value added to the cost of raw materials and bought-out parts by the process of production and distribution. In HR speak, a value-added approach means creating value through HR initiatives that make a significant contribution to organizational success. Strictly speaking, added value is measured by the extent to which the value of that contribution exceeds its cost or generates a return on investment. But the term is often used more generally to signify the business-oriented approach that HR professionals are expected to adopt and how it contributes to the creation of value by the firm. Adding value is about improving performance and results – getting more out of an activity than was put into it.

### **Critical evaluation of the business partner concept**

It can be argued that too much has been made of the business partner model. Perhaps it is preferable to emphasize that the role of HR professionals is to be part of the business rather than merely being partners. There is the danger of overemphasizing the seemingly glamorous role of business or strategic partner at the expense of the service delivery aspect of the HR practitioner's role. Syrett (2006) noted that whatever strategic aspirations senior HR practitioners have, they will amount to nothing if the function they represent cannot deliver the essential transactional services their internal line clients require. As an HR specialist commented to Caldwell (2004): 'My credibility depends on running an extremely efficient and cost-effective administrative machine... If I don't get that right, and consistently, then you can forget about any big ideas.' Another person interviewed during Caldwell's research referred to personnel people as 'reactive pragmatists', a realistic situation in many organizations.

The problem of the overemphasis on the business partner role has been influenced by the erroneous belief that Ulrich was simply focusing on HR executives as business partners. This has had the unfortunate effect of implying that it was their only worthwhile function. But Ulrich cannot be blamed for this. In 1998 he gave equal emphasis to the need for HR people to be administrative experts, employee champions and change agents, and this was confirmed in the revised model (Ulrich and Brockbank, 2005).

### **Example – business partnering at the Automobile Association (AA)**

The key competencies required by the AA for its business partners are concerned with commercial decision-making, commerciality, influencing people and facilitating change. They have to:

- understand the key factors affecting overall costs and profits;
- understand and interpret financial data;
- understand the connectivity between functional areas of the business;
- understand the impact of actions on cash flow and profitability.



## The innovation role

A strategic and therefore proactive approach to HRM will mean that HR specialists will need to innovate – to introduce new processes and procedures they believe will increase organizational effectiveness.

The case for innovation should be established by processes of analysis and diagnosis using an evidence-based management approach to identify the business need and the issues to be addressed. ‘Benchmarking’ can be used to identify ‘best practice’ in other organizations. But ‘best fit’ is more important than ‘best practice’ – in other words, the innovation should meet the particular needs of the business, which are likely to differ from those of other ‘best practice’ organizations. It has to be demonstrable that the innovation is appropriate, beneficial, practical in the circumstances and can be implemented without too much difficulty in the shape of opposition from those affected by it or the unjustifiable use of resources – financial and the time of those involved.

The danger, according to Marchington (1995), is that HR people may go in for ‘impression management’ – aiming to make an impact on senior managers and colleagues through publicizing high-profile innovations. HR specialists who try to draw attention to themselves simply by promoting the latest flavour of the month, irrespective of its relevance or practicality, are falling into the trap that Drucker (1955: 243), anticipating Marchington by 40 years, described as follows: ‘The constant worry of all personnel administrators is their inability to prove that they are making a contribution to the enterprise. Their preoccupation is with the search for a “gimmick” which will impress their management colleagues.’

As Marchington points out, the risk is that people believe ‘all can be improved by a wave of the magic wand and the slaying of a few evil characters along the way’. This facile assumption means that people can too readily devise elegant solutions that do not solve the problem because of the hazards encountered during implementation – for example, the indifference or even open hostility of line managers. These have to be anticipated and catered for.

Guidelines for HR innovations are set out below.

### Guidelines for HR innovations

As change agents HR specialists have to be experts in innovation. The following are guidelines on what needs to be done:

- Be clear on what has to be achieved and why.
- Ensure that what you do fits the strategy, culture and circumstances of the organization.
- Don’t follow fashion – do your own thing as long as it is relevant and fits the organization’s needs.
- Keep it simple – overcomplexity is a common reason for failure.
- Don’t rush – it will take longer than you think.
- Don’t try to do too much at once – an incremental approach is generally best.
- Assess resource requirements and costs.
- Pay close attention to project planning and management.
- Remember that the success of the innovation rests as much on the effectiveness of the process of implementation (line manager buy-in and skills are crucial) as it does on the quality of the concept, if not more so.
- Focus on change management approaches – communicate, involve and train.

## The change agent role

The implementation of strategy means that HR specialists have to act as change agents, facilitating change by providing advice and support on its introduction and management. Caldwell (2001) categorized HR change agents in four dimensions:

- 1 *Transformational change* – a major change that has a dramatic effect on HR policy and practice across the whole organization.
- 2 *Incremental change* – gradual adjustments of HR policy and practices which affect single activities or multiple functions.

- 3 *HR vision* – a set of values and beliefs that affirm the legitimacy of the HR function as a strategic business partner.
- 4 *HR expertise* – the knowledge and skills that define the unique contribution the HR professional can make to effective people management.

## Carrying out the role of the HR professional

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How HR professionals carry out these roles depends on the context in which they work (the culture of the organization, the types of activities it carries out and the requirements of senior management), their skills and disposition and, importantly, the values they adopt. They will be affected by ambiguity and questions on the status of the profession and what is involved in being a professional. All this demands competency in a number of areas and requirements to adopt certain behaviours.

### The values of HR

The most important aspect of values is the ethical stance HR people take in promoting people management policies and practices that are just, fair and take account of the interests of employees as well as those of the business. The pressure on HR practitioners in the private sector is to promote the interests of the business and thus increase shareholder value. In the public sector, the pressure is to promote the aims of the organization. The problem is that, as observed by Parkes and Davis (2013: 2413): ‘HR seems wedded to its allegiance to profitability and distancing itself from any connections with welfare.’ They also note that: ‘The economic drivers for organizations are important but the danger of relying only on the business-case is that ethics and responsibility become optional.’

### Ambiguities in the role of HR practitioners

The activities and roles of HR specialists and the demands made upon them as described above appear

to be quite clear cut, but Thurley (1981) pointed out that HR practitioners can be specialists in ambiguity. This continues in the age of Ulrich. As Hope-Hailey *et al* (2005: 51) commented: ‘Ulrich highlighted that HR professionals must be both strategic and operational, yet the potential role conflict this could engender was not addressed.’ Caldwell (2004: 212) reached the following conclusions on the basis of his research:

There is the issue of ‘powerlessness’ or the marginality of HR practitioners in management decision-making processes, especially at a strategic level. The HR function has an inward-looking tendency to identify professional expertise mainly with administrative concerns over who controls HR activities, rather than questions of HR practices or who has responsibility for implementing HR policy.

The difficulties that HR professionals face in dealing with ambiguity was well described by Guest and King (2004: 421):

Much management activity is typically messy and ambiguous. This appears to apply more strongly to people management than to most other activities. By implication, the challenge lies not in removing or resolving the ambiguities in the role [of HR professionals] but in learning to live with them. To succeed in this requires skills in influencing, negotiating and learning when to compromise. For those with a high tolerance of ambiguity, the role of HR specialist, with its distinctive opportunity to contribute to the management of people in organizations, offers unique challenges; for those only comfortable if they can resolve the ambiguities, the role may become a form of purgatory.

### The status of HR

Over the years, the HR profession has suffered from an inferiority complex. This may arise because the role of HR professionals is ill-defined (they are unsure of where they stand), their status is not fully recognized, or top management and line managers have equivocal views about their value to the organization. Tyson and Fell (1986: 68) remarked that ‘the ambiguous character of their work contributes to the problems of convincing others of its value’.



Long ago Drucker (1955: 243) observed that: ‘The constant worry of all personnel administrators is their inability to prove that they are making a contribution to the organization.’ Skinner (1981: 106) in his *Harvard Business Review* article, ‘Big hat no cattle’, stated that ‘the corporate role of personnel has always been problematic’; and Tyson and Fell (1986: 136) argued that: ‘Classical personnel management has not been granted a position in decision-making circles because it has frequently not earned one. It has not been concerned with the totality of the organization but often with issues which have not only been parochial but esoteric to boot.’

Watson (1996) referred to the perpetual marginality of the HR function and Caldwell (2004: 212) raised the ‘issue of “powerlessness” or the marginality of HR practitioners in management decision-making processes’.

Traditionally, the HR practitioner’s reaction to this problem has been, in the words of Drucker (1955: 243) to ‘search for a “gimmick” that will impress their management colleagues’. This was later called adopting ‘the flavour of the month’. HR professionals have now become more sophisticated. They have enthusiastically supported approaches that appeal to management such as engagement policies and talent management. And in the UK, CIPD spends a lot of time attempting to boost the status of the HR profession by stressing the strategic and business partner role of practitioners.

But research conducted by Guthrie *et al* (2011: 1681) confirmed that: ‘HR departments are still often viewed, collectively, as a function that is more bureaucratic than strategic.’ They noted previous research, which has shown that ‘it is this role – the strategic role – in which line executives believe that HR is particularly deficient’ (ibid: 1682). The following perceptive comment was made on this trend by Keegan and Francis (2010: 878):

Bearing in mind the history of HR practitioners’ struggles for acceptance as key organizational players it is hardly surprising that a way of discursively modelling the concept of HR as ‘hard’ and relating it to others concepts such as ‘business driven agendas’ and ‘strategic management’, has become so popular. It offers perhaps a way out of the dualism when they seek to claim a share of strategic decision making while at the same time struggling to attend to the employee centred and administrative aspects of the role.

They also commented that: ‘Exhortations for HR practitioners to pursue strategic roles and downplay their historically embedded administrative and employee championing pose a serious threat to the integrity of HR work and claims to professional expertise’ (ibid: 894).

## What it means to be an HR professional

Professionalism in HR as in other fields can be defined generally as the conduct exhibited by people who are providing advice and services that require expertise and that meet defined or generally accepted standards of behaviour. Work done by a professional is usually distinguished by its reference to a framework of fundamental concepts that reflect the skilful application of specialized education, training and experience. It is accompanied by a sense of responsibility and an acceptance of recognized standards. Even more loosely, people can be described as acting ‘professionally’ when they do their work well and act responsibly.

Professionalism in HR means working in accordance with a professional ethos. As suggested by Fletcher (2004) this is characterized by:

- the possession of specialized knowledge and skills;
- power and status based on expertise;
- self-discipline and adherence to some aspirational performance standards;
- the opportunity to display high levels of autonomy;
- the ability to apply some independence of judgement;
- operating, and being guided by, a code of ethics.

HR professionals are required to uphold the standards laid down by their professional body, the CIPD, but they must also adhere to their own ethical values. Additionally, they are bound by organizational codes of conduct expressed formally or accepted and understood as core values (the basic values adopted by an organization that set out what is believed to be important about how people and organizations should behave).

## HR competencies

The demands made on HR professionals in terms of skills and expected behaviours are considerable although, nowadays, as Keegan and Francis (2010: 884) commented, ‘Success in HR roles is measured in terms of developing an effective business rather than people skills.’ Brockbank *et al* (1999) conducted research that led to a definition of the key HR competency ‘domains’ and their components, as set out in Table 3.1.

## HR behaviours

The CIPD’s HR profession map first issued in June 2009 (CIPD, 2013) listed the following behaviours needed by HR professionals to carry out their activities:

- curious;
- decisive thinker;
- skilled influencer;
- driven to deliver;
- collaborative;
- personally credible;
- courage to challenge;
- role model.

**TABLE 3.1** Key HR specialist competency areas (Brockbank *et al*, 1999)

Competency domain	Components
1 Personal credibility	Live the firm’s values, maintain relationships founded on trust, act with an ‘attitude’ (a point of view about how the business can win, backing up opinion with evidence).
2 Ability to manage change	Drive change: ability to diagnose problems, build relationships with clients, articulate a vision, set a leadership agenda, solve problems and implement goals.
3 Ability to manage culture	Act as ‘keepers of the culture’, identify the culture required to meet the firm’s business strategy, frame culture in a way that excites employees, translate desired culture into specific behaviours, encourage executives to behave consistently with the desired culture.
4 Delivery of human resource practices	Expert in the speciality, able to deliver state-of-the-art innovative HR practices in such areas as recruitment, employee development, compensation and communication.
5 Understanding of the business	Strategy, organization, competitors, finance, marketing, sales, operations and IT.

## The HR role of line managers

HR can initiate new policies and practices but it is line managers that have the main responsibility for implementing them. In other words, HR proposes but the line disposes. As Guest (1991: 159) observed: ‘HRM is too important to be left to personnel managers.’

If line managers are not inclined favourably towards what HR wants them to do they won’t do it or, if compelled to, they will be half-hearted about it. On the basis of their research, Guest and King (2004: 421) noted that ‘better HR depended not so much on better procedures but better implementation and ownership of implementation by line managers’.

As pointed out by Purcell *et al* (2003), high levels of organizational performance are not achieved simply by having a range of well-conceived HR policies and practices in place. What makes the difference is how these policies and practices are implemented. That is where the role of line managers in people management is crucial: ‘managers... play a vital role in making involvement happen, in communicating, in being open to allow employee concerns to be raised and discussed, in allowing people space to influence how they do their job, and in coaching, guiding and recognizing performance and providing help for the future’ (ibid: 40). Purcell and his colleagues noted that dealing with people is perhaps the aspect of their work in which line managers can exercise the greatest amount of discretion and they can use that discretion by not putting HR’s ideas into practice. As they observed, it is line managers who bring HR policies to life.

A further factor affecting the role of line managers is their ability to do the HR tasks assigned to them. People-centred activities such as defining roles (job design), interviewing, reviewing performance, providing feedback, coaching, and identifying learning and development needs all require special skills. Some managers have them; many don’t. Performance management systems and performance-related pay schemes can easily fail because of untrained line managers. The implementation of policies to enhance

engagement levels (as described in Chapter 15) depends largely on line managers.

Hutchinson and Purcell (2003) made the following recommendations on how to improve the quality of the contribution line managers make to people management.

### Source review

Improving the quality of line managers as people managers – Hutchinson and Purcell (2003)

- Provide them with time to carry out their people management duties, which are often superseded by other management duties.
- Select them carefully with much more attention being paid to the behavioural competencies required.
- Support them with strong organizational values concerning leadership and people management.
- Encourage the development of a good working relationship with their own managers.
- Ensure they receive sufficient skills training to enable them to perform their people management activities such as performance management.

To which can be added that better implementation and better ownership by line managers of HR practices is more likely to be achieved if: 1) the practice demonstrably benefits them; 2) they are involved in the development and, importantly, the testing of the practices; 3) the practice is not too complicated, bureaucratic or time-consuming; 4) their responsibilities are defined and communicated clearly; and 5) they are provided with the guidance, support and training required to implement the practice.

**Key learning points: Delivering HRM – systems and roles****HRM delivery**

HRM is delivered through the HR architecture of an organization, which includes the HR system, HR practices and the HR delivery model adopted by the HR function.

**HR architecture**

HR architecture includes the HR systems and processes and employee behaviours as well as the structure of the HR function.

**The HR system**

The HR system as part of the HR architecture consists of the interrelated and jointly supportive HR activities and practices, which together enable HRM goals to be achieved.

**The HR delivery model**

The HR delivery model describes how those services are delivered by the HR function. The best known model was produced by Ulrich in 1998; he suggested that HR could be delivered by specialists in four ways: strategic partner, administrative expert, employee champion and change agent.

**The 'three-legged stool' model of the HR function**

This model identifies three areas of HR activity: centres of expertise, strategic business partners and shared service centres.

**Roles of HR professionals**

They can act as business partners, strategists, innovators, change agents, internal consultants, facilitators and coaches.

**Ambiguities in the role of HR practitioners**

The activities and roles of HR specialists and the demands made upon them appear to be quite clear cut but in practice the role can be ambiguous.

**Professionalism in HR**

Professionalism is defined generally as the conduct exhibited by people who are providing advice and services that require expertise and that meet defined or generally accepted standards of behaviour. HR professionals are required to uphold the standards laid down by their professional body, the CIPD, but they must also adhere to their own ethical values.

**The HR role of line managers**

Line managers play a crucial role in implementing HR policies but they are not always committed or qualified to do so.

## Questions

- 1 How is HRM delivered?
- 2 What is HRM architecture?
- 3 What is an HR system?
- 4 What are the key HR practices?
- 5 What is the HR delivery model?
- 6 What is the ‘three-legged stool’ model for organizing the HR function?
- 7 What are the main roles of HR professionals?
- 8 What are the key HR competency domains or areas identified by Brockbank and his colleagues?
- 9 What does professionalism in HR involve?
- 10 What is the HR role of line managers?

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# 04

## HRM and performance

### KEY CONCEPTS AND TERMS

The black box

Causal ambiguity

High-performance culture

High-performance work system

HR value chain

Performance management

Reversed causality

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

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On completing this chapter you should be able to define these key concepts. You should also understand:

- What impact HRM can make on performance
- How HRM makes that impact
- The nature of a high-performance culture
- How a high-performance work system functions
- The role of performance management
- How HR can contribute



## Introduction

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All organizations are under an obligation to their stakeholders to perform well. To do this they depend on the quality, dedication, enthusiasm, expertise and skill of the people working in them at every level. The message of the resource-based view is that HRM delivers added value and helps to achieve sustainable competitive advantage through the strategic development of the organization's rare, hard-to-imitate and hard-to-substitute human resources. As Guest (1997: 269) argued: 'The distinctive feature of HRM is its assumption that improved performance is achieved through the people in the organization.' If, therefore, appropriate HR policies and practices are introduced, it can also be assumed that HRM will impact on firm performance.

The chapter begins with a review of the evidence that HRM makes an impact on performance and of the problems met by researchers in establishing what the link is and how it works. It continues with a description of the concept of a high-performance culture and how it can be achieved through a high-performance work system and performance management.

## The impact of HR

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Much research has been carried out showing that good HRM practice and firm performance are correlated; notable examples in the UK are Guest *et al* (2000a), Patterson *et al* (1997), Purcell *et al* (2003), Thompson (2002) and West *et al* (2002), summarized in Table 4.1.

## How HRM makes an impact

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Storey *et al* (2009: 4) observed that: 'The premise is that, in some shape or form, HR policies have an effect on HR practices and these in turn influence staff attitudes and behaviours which will, in turn again, impact on service offerings and customer perceptions of value.' The assumption is that good HRM practices will enhance performance. This is supported by the notion of 'best practice HRM', which as noted in Chapter 2 is illustrated by lists

such as Pfeffer's (1998). Bowen and Ostroff (2004) argued that the link between HRM and performance is likely to be greater where what they describe as a 'strong' HR system is in place. Core characteristics of their 'strong' system are high levels of distinctiveness, consistency and consensus. Where these are present there will be an organizational climate that supports HR implementation. But they also made the obvious suggestion that it is not enough to have good practices if they are not properly implemented. As Guest (2011: 6) commented: 'What this does is switch the focus to line management.' Nishii *et al* (2008) argued that it is not just the presence of practices that is important but 'perceptions about the intentions behind the practices'.

An extensive research project conducted by Guest and Conway (2011) led to the finding that consensus on HR effectiveness did not support Bowen and Ostroff's (2004) proposition that a strong HR system would have a significant association with outcomes. Guest and Conway commented that their study revealed very low levels of agreement about HR effectiveness. They concluded that: 'There are three elements in a logical model of HR effectiveness. HR practices must be present, they must be effective and they must be effectively implemented' (*ibid*: 1700).

## Uncertainties about the link between HRM and performance

As noted earlier, much research has demonstrated an association between HRM and performance. But Guest *et al* (2000b) observed that it left uncertainties about cause and effect. Ulrich (1997: 304) pointed out that: 'HR practices seem to matter; logic says it is so; survey findings confirm it. Direct relationships between performance and attention to HR practices are often fuzzy, however, and vary according to the population sampled and the measures used.' Guest (2011: 11) summed up his article on HRM and performance with the comment that: 'After hundreds of research studies we are still in no position to assert with any confidence that good HRM has an impact on organization performance.'

There are two issues that affect the determination of a link between HRM and firm performance: 'causal ambiguity' and 'contingency factors'. These contribute to what is known as the 'black box' phenomenon.



**TABLE 4.1** Research on the link between HRM and firm performance

Researcher(s)	Methodology	Outcomes
Patterson <i>et al</i> (1997)	The research examined the link between business performance and organization culture and the use of a number of HR practices.	HR practices explained significant variations in profitability and productivity (19% and 18% respectively). Two HR practices were particularly significant: 1) the acquisition and development of employee skills, and 2) job design including flexibility, responsibility and variety.
Guest <i>et al</i> (2000a)	An analysis of the 1998 WERS survey, which sampled some 2,000 workplaces and obtained the views of about 28,000 employees.	A strong association exists between HRM and both employee attitudes and workplace performance.
Thompson (2002)	A study of the impact of high-performance work practices such as teamworking, appraisal, job rotation, broad-banded grade structures and sharing of business information in UK aerospace establishments.	The number of HR practices and the proportion of the workforce covered appeared to be the key differentiating factor between more and less successful firms.
West <i>et al</i> (2002)	Research conducted in 61 UK hospitals obtaining information on HR strategy, policy and procedures from chief executives and HR directors and mortality rates.	An association between certain HR practices and lower mortality rates was identified. As noted by West: 'If you have HR practices that focus on effort and skill; develop people's skills; encourage cooperation, collaboration, innovation and synergy in teams for most, if not all employees, the whole system functions and performs better.'
Purcell <i>et al</i> (2003)	A University of Bath longitudinal study of 12 companies to establish how people management impacts on organizational performance.	The most successful companies had 'the big idea'. They had a clear vision and a set of integrated values. They were concerned with sustaining performance and flexibility. Clear evidence existed between positive attitudes towards HR policies and practices, levels of satisfaction, motivation and commitment, and operational performance. Policy and practice implementation (not the number of HR practices adopted) is the vital ingredient in linking people management to business performance and this is primarily the task of line managers.

**TABLE 4.1** Continued

Researcher(s)	Methodology	Outcomes
Birdi <i>et al</i> (2008)	A longitudinal research study by the Institute of Work Psychology, University of Sheffield covering 308 companies over 22 years, designed to establish the impact of various HRM and operational practices on company productivity.	It was found that the impact of empowerment (job enrichment) was to produce a gain of nearly 7% of value added per employee, while the gain for extensive training was nearly 6%. But teamwork did not make a significant impact, neither did total quality management or just-in-time.

### Causal ambiguity

The term causal ambiguity refers to the numerous, subtle and often hidden interconnections between the factors influencing cause and effect. Boselie *et al* (2005: 75) referred to the causal distance between an HRM input and an output such as financial performance: ‘Put simply, so many variables and events, both internal and external, affect organizations that this direct linkage strains credibility.’

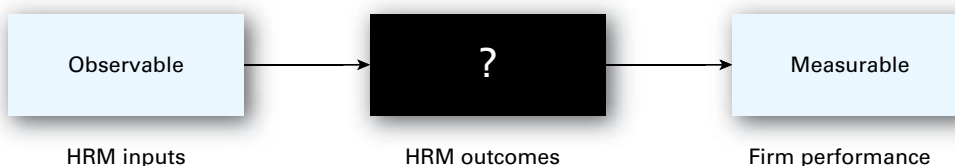
A basic reason for ambiguity is multiple causation, which exists when there is more than one possible cause for an effect. HRM may have caused an improvement in performance but there may be many other economic or business factors that did so, and it could be difficult to unravel them. Another factor is the possibility of reversed causality (a situation where A might have caused B but B might well have caused A). As Purcell *et al* (2003: 2) expressed it: ‘Although it is nice to believe that more HR practices leads to higher economic return, it is just as possible that it is successful firms that can afford more extensive (and expensive) HRM practices.’

### Contingency factors

Causation will additionally be affected by the organization’s context, ie the internal and external environmental factors that influence what happens within the organization.

### The black box phenomenon

Causal ambiguity also stems from the black box phenomenon, as illustrated in Figure 4.1. This is the situation in which, while it may be possible to observe HRM inputs in the form of HR practices and to measure firm performance outputs, it may be difficult to ascertain, through research, what happened in between – what the HRM outcomes were that converted the input of HR practices into firm performance outputs. Alvesson (2009: 56) suggested that: ‘Research does not proceed beyond attempts to find an empirical association between HR practices and organizational performance. The phenomena are in a black box, only input and output are registered and what is happening remains clouded in the dark.’

**FIGURE 4.1** The black box phenomenon

## Explanations of how HRM makes an impact

Guest (1997: 268) stated that: ‘The assumption is that “appropriate” HRM practices tap the motivation and commitment of employees.’ He explained how expectancy theory might help to explain the HR/performance link as follows:

The expectancy theory of motivation provides one possible basis for developing a more coherent rationale about the link between HRM practices and performance. Although expectancy theory is concerned primarily with motivation, it is also a theory about the link between motivation and performance. Specifically, it proposes that high performance, at the individual level, depends on high motivation plus possession of the necessary skills and abilities and an appropriate role and understanding of that role. It is a short step to specify the HRM practices that encourage high skills and abilities, for example careful selection and high investment in training; high motivation, for example employee involvement and possibly performance-related pay; and an appropriate role structure and role perception, for example job design and extensive communication and feedback.

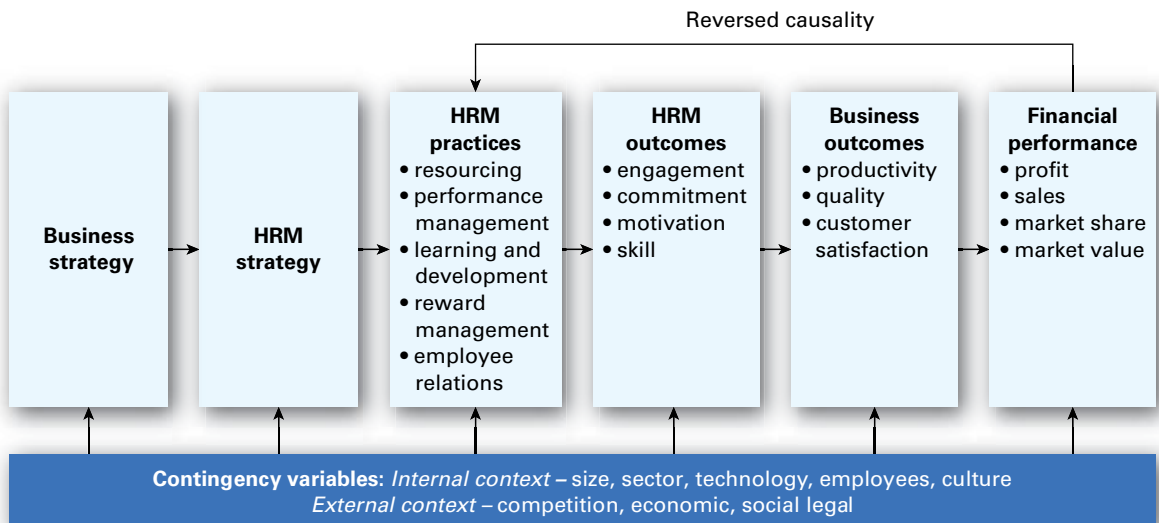
Following this contribution from Guest, any explanation of the impact of HRM on organizational

performance is likely to be based on three propositions: 1) that HR practices can make a direct impact on employee characteristics such as engagement, commitment, motivation and skill; 2) if employees have these characteristics it is probable that organizational performance in terms of productivity, quality and the delivery of high levels of customer service will improve; and 3) if such aspects of organizational performance improve, the financial results achieved by the organization will improve. This can be described as the HR value chain.

The propositions highlight the existence of an intermediate factor between HRM and financial performance. This factor consists of the HRM outcomes in the shape of employee characteristics affected by HR practices. Therefore, HRM does not make a direct impact. A model of the impact of HRM taking into account the considerations of reverse causation and contingency effects mentioned earlier is shown in Figure 4.2.

But high performance is not just about HR practices. The case-based research by Purcell *et al* (2003) showed that the key to activating what they called the ‘people-performance’ link lies not only in well-crafted ‘bundles’ of HR practices, but in their conjunction with a powerful and cohering organizational vision (or ‘big idea’) and corporate leadership, together with front-line leadership’s action and use of its discretionary power.

**FIGURE 4.2** Impact of HRM on organizational performance (based on Paauwe, 2004)



## Developing a high-performance culture

Organizations achieve sustained high performance through the systems of work they adopt, but these systems are managed and operated by people. Ultimately, therefore, high-performance working is

about improving performance through people. This can be done through the development and implementation of a high-performance culture involving high-performance work systems in which performance management plays an important part.

High-performance cultures are ones in which the achievement of high levels of performance is a way of life. The characteristics of such cultures are set out below.

### Characteristics of a high-performance culture

- Management defines what it requires in the shape of performance improvements, sets goals for success and monitors performance to ensure that the goals are achieved.
- Alternative work practices are adopted such as job redesign, autonomous work teams, improvement groups, team briefing and flexible working.
- People know what is expected of them – they understand their goals and accountabilities.
- People feel that their job is worth doing, and there is a strong fit between the job and their capabilities.
- People are empowered to maximize their contribution.
- There is strong leadership from the top that engenders a shared belief in the importance of continuing improvement.
- There is a focus on promoting positive attitudes that result in an engaged, committed and motivated workforce.
- Performance management processes are aligned to business goals to ensure that people are engaged in achieving agreed objectives and standards.
- Capacities of people are developed through learning at all levels to support performance improvement and they are provided with opportunities to make full use of their skills and abilities.
- A pool of talent ensures a continuous supply of high performers in key roles.
- People are valued and rewarded according to their contribution.
- People are involved in developing high-performance practices.
- There is a climate of trust and teamwork, aimed at delivering a distinctive service to the customer.
- A clear line of sight exists between the strategic aims of the organization and those of its departments and its staff at all levels.

## High-performance work systems

High-performance work systems (HPWS) are bundles of HR practices that facilitate employee involvement, skill enhancement and motivation. An HPWS was described by Becker and Huselid (1998: 55) as:

‘An internally consistent and coherent HRM system that is focused on solving operational problems and implementing the firm’s competitive strategy.’ The approach used in an HPWS is sometimes referred to as ‘high-performance working’.

Performance cultures are created by HPWS that embody ways of thinking about performance in organizations and how it can be improved. They are

concerned with developing and implementing bundles of complementary practices that, as an integrated whole, will make a much more powerful impact on performance than if they were dealt with as separate entities. Appelbaum *et al* (2000) stated that HPWS facilitate employee involvement, skill enhancement and motivation.

### Features of an HPWS

There is no generally accepted definition of an HPWS and there is no standard list of the features or components of such a system. In spite of this problem of definition, an attempt to describe the basic components of an HPWS was made by Shih *et al* (2005) as follows:

- *Job infrastructure* – workplace arrangements that equip workers with the proper abilities to do their jobs, provide them with the means to do their jobs, and give them the motivation to do their jobs. These practices must be combined to produce their proper effects.
- *Training programmes to enhance employee skills* – investment in increasing employee skills, knowledge and ability.
- *Information sharing and worker involvement mechanisms* – to understand the available alternatives and make correct decisions.
- *Reward and promotion opportunities that provide motivation* – to encourage skilled employees to engage in effective discretionary decision-making in a variety of environmental contingencies.

Many descriptions of high-performance systems include lists of desirable features and therefore embody the notion of ‘best practice’. However, Gephart (1995) noted that research has not clearly identified any single set of high-performance practices. Becker *et al* (1997) pointed out that HPWS were highly idiosyncratic and had to fit the organization’s individual circumstances. The lists that have been compiled vary considerably, as is shown in the selection set out in Table 4.2.

### Examples

The examples in Table 4.3 of firms that adopt high-performance working policies and practices, assembled by Stevens (2005), illustrate the variety and generalized nature of approaches.

### Critical evaluation of the high-performance work system approach

Research conducted by Ramsay *et al* (2000) aimed to explore linkages from HPWS practices to employee outcomes, and via these to organizational performance. They referred to the existence of the ‘black box’, meaning that while the introduction of an HPWS may be associated with improved performance, no researchers have yet established how this happens. They commented that ‘the widely held view that positive performance outcomes from HPWS flow via positive employee outcomes has been shown to be highly questionable’ (ibid: 521).

Godard (2001) concluded, following his research in Canada, that the actual effects of high-performance work systems can vary considerably and many have a limited lifespan. Following further research, he commented in 2004 that:

The full adoption of this (high performance) paradigm may not yield outcomes that are appreciably more positive than those yielded by practices that have long been associated with good management, including professional personnel practices (eg job ladders, employment security, grievance systems, formal training, above-market pay), group work organization, information sharing and accommodative union relations policies... There may be positive effects in some workplaces. However, these effects may be inherently more limited than assumed and, in a great many workplaces, may not be sufficient to justify full adoption.

**TABLE 4.2** Components of an HPWS

US Department of Labor (1993)	Appelbaum <i>et al</i> (2000)	Sung and Ashton (2005)	Thompson and Heron (2005)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Careful and extensive systems for recruitment, selection and training.</li> <li>Formal systems for sharing information with employees.</li> <li>Clear job design.</li> <li>High-level participation processes.</li> <li>Monitoring of attitudes.</li> <li>Performance appraisals.</li> <li>Properly functioning grievance procedures.</li> <li>Promotion and compensation schemes that provide for the recognition and reward of high-performing employees.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work is organized to permit front-line workers to participate in decisions that alter organizational routines.</li> <li>Workers require more skills to do their jobs successfully, and many of these skills are firm specific.</li> <li>Workers experience greater autonomy over their job tasks and methods of work.</li> <li>Incentive pay motivates workers to extend extra effort on developing skills.</li> <li>Employment security provides front-line workers with a long-term stake in the company and a reason to invest in its future.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>High-involvement work practices – eg self-directed teams, quality circles and sharing/ access to company information.</li> <li>Human resource practices – eg sophisticated recruitment processes, performance appraisals, work redesign and mentoring.</li> <li>Reward and commitment practices – eg various financial rewards, family friendly policies, job rotation and flexi-hours.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Information sharing.</li> <li>Sophisticated recruitment.</li> <li>Formal induction programme.</li> <li>Five or more days of off-the-job training in the last year.</li> <li>Semi- or totally autonomous work teams; continuous improvement teams; problem-solving groups.</li> <li>Interpersonal skills development.</li> <li>Performance feedback.</li> <li>Involvement – works council, suggestion scheme, opinion survey.</li> <li>Team-based rewards, employee share ownership scheme, profit-sharing scheme.</li> </ul>

But research conducted by Sung and Ashton (2005), Combs *et al* (2006) and Ericksen (2007) indicated that an HPWS can significantly improve performance. Even so, it is still possible to have reservations about causality and there seems to be no agreement on what constitutes an HPWS except for variable lists of ‘best practices’ – a dubious concept. As

Godard (2004) commented, these lists are no more than bundles of long-accepted good personnel practices. Perhaps the virtue of the HPWS model is simply that it makes people think about what can be done to improve performance and how the various approaches can be linked together in a cohesive action programme.

**TABLE 4.3** Examples of high-performance working ingredients

Organization	High-performance working ingredients
Halo Foods	<p>A strategy that maintains competitiveness by increasing added value through the efforts and enhanced capability of all staff.</p> <p>The integration of technical advance with people development.</p> <p>Continuing reliance on teamworking and effective leadership, with innovation and self- and team management skills.</p>
Land Registry	<p>Organizational changes to streamline processes, raise skill levels and release talents.</p> <p>Managers who could see that the problems were as much cultural as organizational.</p> <p>Recruitment of people whose attitudes and aptitudes match the needs of high-performance work practices.</p>
Meritor Heavy Vehicle Braking Systems	<p>Skill enhancement, particularly of management and self-management skills using competence frameworks.</p> <p>Teamworking skills and experience used on improvement projects.</p> <p>Linking learning, involvement and performance management.</p>
Orangebox	<p>A strategy that relies on constant reinvention of operational capability.</p> <p>Engagement and development of existing talent and initiative in productivity improvement.</p> <p>Increasing use of cross-departmental projects to tackle wider opportunities.</p>
Perkinelmer	<p>A vision and values worked through by managers and supervisors.</p> <p>Engagement of everyone in the organization and establishment of a continuous improvement culture.</p> <p>Learning as a basis for change.</p>
United Welsh Housing Association	<p>Linking of better employment relations with better performance.</p> <p>Using staff experience to improve customer service.</p> <p>Focusing management development on the cascading of a partnership culture.</p>

## Performance management

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Performance management can contribute to the development of a high-performance culture in an organization by delivering the message that high performance is important. The management of organizational performance is the continuing responsibility of top management who, with the help and advice of HR, plan, organize, monitor and control activities and provide leadership to achieve strategic objectives and satisfy the needs and requirements of stakeholders. Individual and team performance management systems play an important part, but they function within the context of what is done to manage organizational performance and to develop effective work systems.

The strategic approach adopted by Johnson & Johnson was described by Wortzel-Hoffman and Boltizar (2007) as follows:

As we embarked on developing an integrated performance and development process into the organization, we knew that driving change and an enhanced process requires a cultural shift within an organization. The best performance management becomes a continuous process and is not a one time event; it takes time and effort and a dedication to developing people. We also knew that from a business standpoint it was critical to build and develop the talent pipeline of the organization to meet the aggressive business goals and dynamically changing marketplace.

Performance management at organizational, team and individual level defines what high performance is and how managers and their teams should achieve it. It explains how performance should be measured and the steps that should be taken to monitor results in comparison with expectations. The means of achieving high performance are provided by defining the performance expectations implicit in the psychological contract, creating high levels of engagement,

motivating people and enhancing skills and competencies through feedback, coaching and personal development planning. Performance management systems are described more fully in Chapter 25.

## The contribution of HR

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HR contributes to enhancing organizational performance by providing insights on the performance issues affecting the organization and its employees. This means identifying the reasons for the issues, exploring their implications for business and people management and conveying these messages to management. The aim is to find new ways of meeting performance challenges.

HR can advise management on the development of a high performance strategy supported by performance and reward initiatives. Additionally, HR can review policies and practices such as those concerned with organizational development, engagement, resourcing, learning and development, and employee relations. Decisions can then be made to enhance existing policies and practices or introduce new ones. Importantly, consideration needs to be given to how integration of these policies and practices can be achieved by linking them together in a 'bundle' so that they are mutually supportive.

HR has then to prepare a business case for any developments or innovations and persuade management to accept it. Line managers and employees should be involved in the development programme and a communications strategy should be created to inform people about what is going on and how it will affect them.

HR will also be involved in producing and project managing an implementation programme. As necessary, learning and development activities and events will be conducted to ensure that line managers and employees have the skills required.



## Key learning points: HRM and performance

### The impact of HRM

Much research has been carried out showing that good HRM practice and firm performance are correlated; notable examples in the UK are Guest *et al* (2000a), Patterson *et al* (1997), Purcell *et al* (2003), Thompson (2002) and West *et al* (2002).

### How HRM makes an impact

Storey *et al* (2009: 4) observed that: 'The premise is that, in some shape or form, HR policies have an effect on HR practices and these in turn influence staff attitudes and behaviours which will, in turn again, impact on service offerings and customer perceptions of value.'

### Explanations of how HRM makes an impact

Guest (1997: 268) stated that: 'The assumption is that "appropriate" HRM practices tap the motivation and commitment of employees.'

An explanation of the impact of HRM is based on three propositions: 1) that HR practices can make a direct impact on employee characteristics such as engagement, commitment, motivation and skill; 2) if employees have these characteristics it is probable that organizational performance in terms of productivity, quality and the delivery of high levels of customer service will improve; and 3) if such aspects of organizational performance improve, the financial results achieved by the organization will improve.

### Developing a high-performance culture

Organizations achieve sustained high performance through the systems of work they adopt, but these systems are managed and operated by people. Ultimately, high-performance working is about improving performance through people. This can be done through the development and implementation of a high-performance culture involving HPWS in which performance management plays an important part.

### High-performance work systems

HPWS are bundles of HR practices that facilitate employee involvement, skill enhancement and motivation. HPWS provide the means for creating a performance culture.

### Performance management

Performance management can contribute to the development of a high-performance culture by delivering the message in an organization that high performance is important.

### The contribution of HR

HR can contribute to enhancing organizational performance by providing insight on the performance issues affecting the organization and its employees.

## Questions

- 1 How does HRM make an impact on performance?
- 2 What is a high-performance culture?
- 3 What is a high-performance work system?
- 4 What are the typical features of a high-performance work system?
- 5 How can performance management contribute?

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# 05

## Human capital management

### KEY CONCEPTS AND TERMS

Balanced scorecard	Human process advantage
Human capital	Intangible resources
Human capital advantage	Intellectual capital
Human capital index – Watson Wyatt	Metrics
Human capital management	Organizational capital
Human capital measurement	Organizational performance model – Mercer HR Consulting
Human capital monitor – Andrew Mayo	Social capital

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

On completing this chapter you should be able to define these key concepts. You should also understand:

- The nature of human capital management
- The concept of human capital
- Characteristics of human capital
- Constituents of human capital
- Significance of human capital theory
- Importance of human capital measurement
- Reasons for interest in human capital measurement
- Approaches to measurement
- Measurement elements
- Factors affecting choice of measurement
- Criteria for HCM data for managers

## Introduction

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As defined by Baron and Armstrong (2007: 20), human capital management (HCM) is concerned with obtaining, analysing and reporting on data that inform the direction of value-adding people management, strategic, investment and operational decisions at corporate level and at the level of front-line management. It is, as emphasized by Kearns (2005), ultimately about value.

## The nature of human capital management

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The Accounting for People Task Force report (2003) stated that HCM involves the systematic analysis, measurement and evaluation of how people policies and practices create value. The report emphasized that HCM should be regarded as an approach to people management that deals with it as a high-level strategic issue rather than a matter to be left to HR. However, Wright and McMahan (2011: 102) warned that human capital should not be treated as a form of capital owned and controlled by the firm: 'To do so would miss the complexity of the construct and continue to ignore the "human" in strategic HRM.'

The defining characteristic of HCM is the use of metrics to guide an approach to managing people that regards them as assets and emphasizes that competitive advantage is achieved by strategic investments in those assets through employee engagement and retention, talent management and learning and development programmes. HCM relates HR strategy to business strategy. The concept of HCM is underpinned by the concept of human capital, as explained below.

## The concept of human capital

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Adam Smith, cited by Schultz (1981: 140), originated the idea of human capital (like so many other economic concepts) when he wrote that: 'The acquired wealth of nations derives from the acquired abilities

of people – their education, experience, skills and health.' Individuals generate, retain and use knowledge and skill (human capital) and create intellectual capital. Their knowledge is enhanced by the interactions between them (social capital) and generates the institutionalized knowledge possessed by an organization (organizational capital). This concept of human capital is explained below.

### **Human capital defined**

Human capital consists of the knowledge, skills and abilities of the people employed in an organization. As Wright and McMahan (2011: 101) explained:

Each individual in the organization has characteristics that comprise human capital. He/she also engages in the processing of information, interpretation and reaction to that information in making choices about how to feel and behave. The aggregation of human capital, we propose, constitutes the organization or unit's 'human capital'.

Human capital constitutes a key element of the market worth of a company. A research study conducted in 2003 by CFO Research Services estimated that the value of human capital represented over 36 per cent of total revenue in a typical organization.

The significance of the term was emphasized by Schultz (1961), who defined it as follows.

#### Source review

Human capital defined – Schultz (1961: 1)

Although it is obvious that people acquire useful skills and knowledge, it is not obvious that these skills and knowledge are a form of capital, that this capital is in substantial part a product of deliberate investment, that it has grown in Western countries at a much faster rate than conventional (non-human) capital, and that its growth may well be the most distinctive feature of the economic system.

He also noted that: ‘Attributes... which are valuable and can be augmented by appropriate investment will be treated as human capital... Consider all human abilities to be either innate or acquired’ (ibid: 21).

A later detailed definition was put forward by Bontis *et al* (1999).

### Source review

Human capital defined – Bontis *et al* (1999: 393)

Human capital represents the human factor in the organization; the combined intelligence, skills and expertise that gives the organization its distinctive character. The human elements of the organization are those that are capable of learning, changing, innovating and providing the creative thrust which if properly motivated can ensure the long-term survival of the organization.

Scarborough and Elias (2002: *ix*) commented that: ‘The concept of human capital is most usefully viewed as a bridging concept – that is, it defines the link between HR practices and business performance in terms of assets rather than business processes.’ They pointed out that human capital is to a large extent ‘non-standardized, tacit, dynamic, context dependent and embodied in people’. These characteristics make it difficult to evaluate human capital, bearing in mind that the ‘features of human capital that are so crucial to firm performance are the flexibility and creativity of individuals, their ability to develop skills over time and to respond in a motivated way to different contexts’ (ibid: *ix*).

It is indeed the knowledge, skills and abilities of individuals that create value, which is why the focus has to be on means of attracting, retaining, developing and maintaining the human capital they represent. Davenport (1999: 7) observed that: ‘People possess innate abilities, behaviours and personal time. These elements make up human capital, the currency people bring to invest in their jobs. Workers, not organizations, own this human capital.’

The choices they make include how much discretionary behaviour they are prepared to exercise in

carrying out their role (discretionary behaviour refers to the discretion that people at work can exercise about the way they do their jobs and the amount of effort, care, innovation and productive behaviour they display). They can also choose whether or not to remain with the organization.

## The constituents of human capital

Human capital consists of intellectual, social and organizational capital.

### Intellectual capital

The concept of human capital is associated with the overarching notion of intellectual capital, which is defined as the stocks and flows of knowledge available to an organization. These can be regarded as the intangible resources associated with people, which together with tangible resources (money and physical assets) comprise the market or total value of a business.

### Social capital

Social capital is another element of intellectual capital. It consists of the knowledge derived from networks of relationships within and outside the organization. Social capital has been defined by Putnam (1996: 66) as ‘the features of social life – networks, norms and trust – that enable participants to act together more effectively to pursue shared objectives’. It is important to take into account social capital considerations, that is, the ways in which knowledge is developed through interaction between people. Bontis *et al* (1999) commented that it is flows as well as stocks that matter. Intellectual capital develops and changes over time and a significant part is played in these processes by people acting together.

### Organizational capital

Organizational capital is the institutionalized knowledge possessed by an organization that is stored in databases, manuals, etc (Youndt, 2000). It is often called ‘structural capital’ (Edvinson and Malone,

1997), but the term ‘organizational capital’ is preferred by Youndt because, he argues, it conveys more clearly that this is the knowledge that the organization actually owns.

## Approaches to people management raised by human capital theory

An approach to people management based on human capital theory involves obtaining answers to these questions:

- What are the key performance drivers that create value?
- What skills do we have?
- What skills do we need now and in the future to meet our strategic aims?
- How are we going to attract, develop and retain these skills?
- How can we develop a culture and environment in which organizational and individual learning takes place that meets both our needs and the needs of our employees?
- How can we provide for both the explicit and tacit knowledge created in our organization to be captured, recorded and used effectively?

Human capital theory helps to determine the impact of people on the business and their contribution to shareholder value. It demonstrates that HR practices produce value for money in terms of, for example, return on investment. It also provides guidance on future HR and business strategies and data that will inform strategies and practices designed to improve the effectiveness of people management in the organization.

## Human capital measurement

The role of human capital measurement is to assess the impact of HRM practices and the contribution made by people to organizational performance.

Human capital measurement is about finding links, correlations and, ideally, causation, between different sets of (HR) data, using statistical techniques.

## *The need for human capital measurement*

Human capital measurement provides a basis for people management decision-making. It means identifying the people management drivers and modelling the effect of varying them. The recognized importance of achieving human capital advantage has led to an interest in the development of methods of measuring the value and impact of that capital for these reasons:

- People in organizations add value and there is a case for assessing this value to provide a basis for HR planning and for monitoring the effectiveness and impact of HR policies and practices.
- The process of identifying measures and collecting and analysing information relating to them will focus the attention of the organization on what needs to be done to find, keep, develop and make the best use of its human capital.
- Measurements can be used to monitor progress in achieving strategic HR goals and generally to evaluate the effectiveness of HR practices.
- You cannot manage unless you measure.

The need is to develop a framework within which reliable information can be collected and analysed such as added value per employee, productivity, and measures of employee behaviour (attrition and absenteeism rates, the frequency/severity rate of accidents, and cost savings resulting from suggestion schemes).

However, the Institute for Employment Studies (Hartley, 2005) emphasized that reporting on human capital is not simply about measurement. Measures on their own such as those resulting from benchmarking are not enough; they must be clearly linked to business performance. It was established by Scarborough and Elias (2002: x), on the basis of their research, that:



Measures are less important than the activity of measuring – of continuously developing and refining our understanding of the productive role of human capital within particular settings, by embedding such activities in management practices, and linking them to the business strategy of the firm.

## Approaches to measurement

Three approaches to measurement are described below.

### The human capital index – Watson Wyatt

On the basis of a survey of companies that have linked together HR management practices and market value, Watson Wyatt Worldwide (2002) identified four major categories of HR practice that could be linked to increases in shareholder value creation. These are:

- total rewards and accountability: 16.5 per cent;
- collegial, flexible workforce: 9.0 per cent;
- recruiting and retention excellence: 7.9 per cent;
- communication integrity: 7.1 per cent.

### The organizational performance model – Mercer HR Consulting

As described by Nalbantian *et al* (2004) the organizational performance model developed by Mercer HR Consulting is based on the following elements: people, work processes, management structure, information and knowledge, decision-making and rewards, each of which plays out differently within the context of the organization, creating a unique DNA.

The statistical tool ‘Internal Labour Market Analysis’ used by Mercer draws on the running record of employee and labour market data to analyse the actual experience of employees rather than stated HR programmes and policies. Thus gaps can be identified between what is required in the workforce to support business goals and what is actually being delivered.

### The human capital monitor – Andrew Mayo

Andrew Mayo (2001) has developed the ‘human capital monitor’ to identify the human value of the enterprise or ‘human asset worth’, which is equal to ‘employment cost × individual asset multiplier’. The latter is a weighted average assessment of capability, potential to grow, personal performance (contribution) and alignment to the organization’s values set in the context of the workforce environment (ie how leadership, culture, motivation and learning are driving success). The absolute figure is not important. What does matter is that the process of measurement leads you to consider whether human capital is sufficient, increasing, or decreasing, and highlights issues to address. Mayo advises against using too many measures and instead to concentrate on a few organization-wide measures that are critical in creating shareholder value or achieving current and future organizational goals.

He believes that value added per person is a good measure of the effectiveness of human capital, especially for making inter-firm comparisons. But he considers that the most critical indicator for the value of human capital is the level of expertise possessed by an organization. He suggests that this could be analysed under the headings of identified organizational core competencies. The other criteria he mentions are measures of satisfaction derived from employee opinion surveys and levels of attrition and absenteeism.

### Measurement data

The main HCM data used for measurement are:

- Basic workforce data – demographic data (numbers by job category, sex, race, age, disability, working arrangements, absence and sickness, turnover and pay).
- People development and performance data – learning and development programmes, performance management/potential assessments, skills and qualifications.
- Perceptual data – attitude/opinion surveys, focus groups, exit interviews.
- Performance data – financial, operational and customer.

A summary of human capital measures and their possible uses is given in Table 5.1.

**TABLE 5.1** A summary of human capital measures and their possible uses

Measures	Possible use: analysis leading to action
Workforce composition – gender, race, age, full-time, part-time	Analyse the extent of diversity Assess the implications of a preponderance of employees in different age groups, eg extent of losses through retirement Assess the extent to which the organization is relying on part-time staff
Length of service distribution	Indicate level of success in retaining employees Indicate preponderance of long- or short-serving employees Enable analysis of performance of more experienced employees to be assessed
Skills analysis/assessment – graduates, professionally/technically qualified, skilled workers	Assess skill levels against requirements Indicate where steps have to be taken to deal with shortfalls
Attrition – employee turnover rates for different categories of management and employees	Indicate areas where steps have to be taken to increase retention rates Provide a basis for assessing levels of commitment
Attrition – cost of	Support business case for taking steps to reduce attrition
Absenteeism/sickness rates	Identify problems and need for more effective attendance management policies
Average number of vacancies as a percentage of total workforce	Identify potential shortfall problem areas
Total payroll costs (pay and benefits)	Provide data for productivity analysis
Compa-ratio – actual rates of pay as a percentage of policy rates	Enable control to be exercised over management of pay structure
Percentage of employees in different categories of contingent pay or payment-by-result schemes	Demonstrate the extent to which the organization believes that pay should be related to contribution
Total pay review increases for different categories of employees as a percentage of pay	Compare actual with budgeted payroll increase costs Benchmark pay increases
Average bonuses or contingent pay awards as a % of base pay for different categories of managers and employees	Analyse cost of contingent pay Compare actual and budgeted increases Benchmark increases

**TABLE 5.1** Continued

Measures	Possible use: analysis leading to action
Outcome of equal pay reviews	Reveal pay gap between male and female employees
Personal development plans completed as a percentage of employees	Indicate level of learning and development activity
Training hours per employee	Indicate actual amount of training activity (note that this does not reveal the quality of training achieved or its impact)
Percentage of managers taking part in formal management development programmes	Indicate level of learning and development activity
Internal promotion rate (% of promotions filled from within)	Indicate extent to which talent management programmes are successful
Succession planning coverage (% of managerial jobs for which successors have been identified)	Indicate extent to which talent management programmes are successful
Percentage of employees taking part in formal performance reviews	Indicate level of performance management activity
Distribution of performance ratings by category of staff and department	Indicate inconsistencies, questionable distributions and trends in assessments
Accident severity and frequency rates	Assess health and safety programmes
Cost savings/revenue increases resulting from employee suggestion schemes	Measure the value created by employees

## Human capital reporting

### Internal reporting

Analysing and reporting human capital data to top management and line managers leads to informed decision-making about what needs to be done to improve business results, the ability to recognize problems and take action to deal with them, and the scope to demonstrate the effectiveness of HR solutions and thus support the business case for greater

investment in HR practices. Data must be accompanied by analysis and explanation.

### External reporting

The EC Accounts Modernization Directive requires companies to prepare a business review. This has to disclose information that is necessary for understanding the development, performance or position of the business of the company, including the analysis of key financial and other performance indicators,

and information relating to environmental and employee matters, social and community issues, and any policies of the company in relation to these matters and their effectiveness.

## Introducing HCM

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As Baron and Armstrong (2007) observed, the development of HCM should be regarded as a journey. It is not an all-or-nothing affair. It does not have to depend on a state-of-the-art HR database or the possession of advanced expertise in statistical analysis.

It is not difficult to record and report on basic data and, although analytical ability is necessary, the level required should be possessed by any HR professional.

At the beginning of the journey an organization may do no more than collect basic HR data on, for instance, employee turnover and absence. But anyone who goes a little bit further and analyses that data to draw conclusions on trends and causation – leading to proposals on the action required supported by that analysis – is into HCM. Not in a big way perhaps, but it is a beginning. At the other end of the scale there are the highly sophisticated approaches to HCM operated by such organizations as Nationwide and Standard Chartered Bank.

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## HCM CASE STUDIES ON APPROACHES TO MEASUREMENT

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### Nationwide Building Society

Nationwide feeds its human capital information into an intranet-based information system that gives users an assessment of how they are doing against a number of indicators. It uses a dashboard of red, amber and green

indicators to give each business unit an idea of how they are faring on a number of key drivers of employee commitment. This is backed up with advice on how improvements might be made.

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### Standard Chartered Bank

Standard Chartered Bank uses a human capital scorecard to analyse its data. This is produced on a quarterly and annual basis with various cuts of the same data produced for different business segments and countries, in addition to a global report. This comprises a series of slides with commentary to enable managers to understand the data.

The data is also included in twice-yearly board reviews on people strategy and forms part of the annual strategy planning process. The scorecard data is reviewed within each global business by a top team 'People Forum'. At country level, each local chief executive and his or her

management committee reviews key trends in order to specify areas they need to focus on.

In addition, the bank uses qualitative analysis to examine trends and this has led it to identify the role of the manager as mediating the relationship between engagement and performance. In turn, this has led to a focus on qualitative research to identify what raises the bank's best managers above the rest. A further example is a qualitative analysis of high performance in selected customer-facing roles to determine the key behaviours that continue to drive customer loyalty.

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## Key learning points: Human capital management

### The concept of human capital

Individuals generate, retain and use knowledge and skill (human capital) and create intellectual capital. Human capital 'defines the link between HR practices and business performance in terms of assets rather than business processes' (Scarborough and Elias, 2002).

### Characteristics of human capital

Human capital is non-standardized, tacit, dynamic, context-dependent and embodied in people (Scarborough and Elias, 2002).

### Constituents of human capital

Human capital consists of intellectual capital, social capital and organizational capital.

### Significance of human capital

Human capital theory regards people as assets and stresses that investment by organizations in people will generate worthwhile returns.

### Importance of human capital measurement

Measuring and valuing human capital is an aid to people management decision-making.

### Reasons for interest in human capital measurement

- Human capital constitutes a key element of the market worth of a company.
- People in organizations add value.
- Focus attention on what needs to be done to make the best use of its human capital.

- Monitor progress in achieving strategic HR goals and evaluate HR practices.
- You cannot manage unless you measure.

### Approaches to measurement

- The human capital index – Watson Wyatt World-wide.
- The organizational performance model – Mercer HR Consulting.
- The human capital monitor – Andrew Mayo.

### Measurement elements

Workforce data, people development data, perceptual data and performance data.

### Factors affecting choice of measurement

- Type of organization; its business goals and drivers.
- The existing key performance indicators (KPIs).
- Use of balanced scorecard.
- The availability, use and manageability of data.

### Criteria for HCM data as a guide to managers

Data will only be useful for managers if:

- it is credible, accurate and trustworthy;
- they understand what it means for them;
- it is accompanied by guidance as to what action can be taken;
- they have the skills and abilities to understand and act upon it.

## Questions

- 1 What is human capital management?
- 2 What is human capital?
- 3 What is intellectual capital?
- 4 What is social capital?
- 5 What is organizational capital?
- 6 What is human capital measurement?
- 7 Why is human capital measurement important?
- 8 What is the main human capital management data used for measurement?

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# 06

# Knowledge management

## KEY CONCEPTS AND TERMS

Communities of practice

Data

Explicit knowledge

Information

Knowledge

Knowledge management

Tacit knowledge

## LEARNING OUTCOMES

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On completing this chapter you should be able to define these key concepts. You should also know about:

- The purpose and significance of knowledge management
- Knowledge management strategies
- Knowledge management systems
- Knowledge management issues
- The contribution HR can make to knowledge management

## Introduction

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Knowledge management is concerned with storing and sharing the wisdom, understanding and expertise accumulated in an enterprise about its processes, techniques and operations. It treats knowledge as a key resource. It was defined by Tan (2000: 10) as: ‘The process of systematically and actively managing and leveraging the stores of knowledge in an organization.’ As Ulrich (1998: 126) remarked: ‘Knowledge has become a direct competitive advantage for companies selling ideas and relationships.’

There is nothing new about knowledge management. Hansen *et al* (1999: 106) observed that: ‘For hundreds of years, owners of family businesses have passed on their commercial wisdom to children, master craftsmen have painstakingly taught their trades to apprentices, and workers have exchanged ideas and know-how on the job.’ But they also commented that: ‘As the foundation of industrialized economies has shifted from natural resources to intellectual assets, executives have been compelled to examine the knowledge underlying their business and how that knowledge is used’ (ibid: 106).

Knowledge management is more concerned with people and how they acquire, exchange and spread knowledge than it is about information technology. That is why it has become an important area for HR practitioners, who are in a strong position to exert influence in this aspect of people management. It is associated with intellectual capital theory (see Chapter 5), in that it refers to the notions of human, social and organizational or structural capital. It is also linked to organizational learning (see Chapter 22).

Knowledge management should be based on an understanding of the concept of knowledge; this is therefore dealt with in the first section of this chapter. In subsequent sections knowledge management is described in more detail, strategies for developing its practice are described and consideration is given to the role of HR.

## The concept of knowledge

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Knowledge is defined as what people understand about things, concepts, ideas, theories, procedures and practices. It can be described as know-how or,

when it is specific, expertise. A distinction was made by Ryle (1949) between ‘knowing how’ and ‘knowing that’. ‘Knowing how’ is the ability of a person to perform tasks, and ‘knowing that’ is holding pieces of knowledge in one’s mind. According to Blackler (1995: 1023): ‘Rather than regarding knowledge as something that people have, it is suggested that knowing is better regarded as something that they do.’ He also noted that: ‘Knowledge is multifaceted and complex, being both situated and abstract, implicit and explicit, distributed and individual, physical and mental, developing and static, verbal and encoded’ (ibid: 1032–33).

Nonaka (1991) suggested that knowledge is held either by individuals or collectively. In Blackler’s (1995) terms, embodied or embraced knowledge is individual and embedded, and cultural knowledge is collective. It can be argued (Scarborough and Carter, 2000) that knowledge emerges from the collective experience of work and is shared between members of a particular group or community.

### Explicit and tacit knowledge

Nonaka (1991) and Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) stated that knowledge is either explicit or tacit. Explicit knowledge can be codified – it is recorded and available and is held in databases, in corporate intranets and intellectual property portfolios. Tacit knowledge exists in people’s minds. It is difficult to articulate in writing and is acquired through personal experience. As suggested by Hansen *et al* (1999), it includes scientific or technological expertise, operational know-how, insights about an industry and business judgement. The main challenge in knowledge management is how to turn tacit knowledge into explicit knowledge.

### Data, information and knowledge

A distinction can be made between data, information and knowledge:

- Data consists of the basic facts – the building blocks – for information and knowledge.
- Information is data that have been processed in a way that is meaningful to individuals; it is available to anyone entitled to gain access to it. As Drucker (1988: 46) put it, ‘information is data endowed with meaning and purpose’.



- Knowledge is information used productively; it is personal and often intangible and it can be elusive – the task of tying it down, encoding it and distributing it is tricky.

## Knowledge management defined

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Knowledge management is about getting knowledge from those who have it to those who need it in order to improve organizational effectiveness. It was defined by Scarborough *et al* (1999: 1) as ‘any process or practice of creating, acquiring, capturing, sharing and using knowledge, wherever it resides, to enhance learning and performance in organizations’. They suggested that it focuses on the development of firm-specific knowledge and skills that are the result of organizational learning processes. Knowledge management deals with both stocks and flows of knowledge. Stocks include expertise and encoded knowledge in computer systems. Flows represent the ways in which knowledge is transferred from people to people or from people to a knowledge database.

Knowledge management identifies relevant information and then disseminates it so that learning can take place. It promotes the sharing of knowledge by linking people with people and by linking them to information so that they learn from recorded experiences. As explained by Blake (1988), the purpose of knowledge management is to capture a company’s collective expertise and distribute it to wherever it can achieve the biggest payoff. This is in accordance with the resource-based view of the firm, which suggests that the source of competitive advantage lies within the firm (ie in its people and their knowledge), not in how it positions itself in the market. A successful company is a knowledge-creating company.

Knowledge is possessed by organizations and people in organizations. Organizational operational, technical and procedural knowledge can be stored in databanks and found in reports, libraries, policy documents, manuals and presentations. It can also be moved around the organization through information systems and by meetings, workshops, courses, ‘master classes’, written publications and ‘communities of practice’, defined by Wenger and

Snyder (2000: 139) as ‘groups of people informally bound together by shared expertise and a passion for joint enterprise’. The intranet provides an additional and very effective medium.

People possess knowledge that has been acquired through their own experiences at work. But it will not necessarily be shared formally or even informally with their colleagues and crucial knowledge could be lost if it remains locked up in the minds of employees, or taken elsewhere by them if they leave the organization. An important issue in knowledge management is how knowledge can be identified and distributed.

In the information age, knowledge rather than physical assets or financial resources is the key to competitiveness. Knowledge management allows companies to make the best use of their employees’ creativity and expertise (Mecklenburg *et al*, 1999). As Boxall and Purcell (2000: 197) noted: ‘Managing knowledge inevitably means managing both the company’s proprietary technologies and systems (which don’t walk out of the door at the end of the day) and the people (who do)’.

## Knowledge management strategies

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Two approaches to knowledge management strategy have been identified by Hansen *et al* (1999): the codification strategy and the personalization strategy.

### **The codification strategy**

Knowledge is carefully codified and stored in databases where it can be accessed and used easily by anyone in the organization. Knowledge is explicit and is codified using a ‘people-to-document’ approach. The strategy is therefore document-driven. Knowledge is extracted from the person who developed it, made independent of that person and reused for various purposes. It is stored in an electronic repository for people to use, and allows people to search for and retrieve codified knowledge without having to contact the person who originally developed it. This strategy relies largely on information technology to manage databases and also on the use of the intranet.

## The personalization strategy

Knowledge is closely tied to the person who has developed it and is shared mainly through direct person-to-person contacts. This ‘person-to-person’ approach means providing for tacit knowledge to be passed on. The exchange is achieved by creating networks and encouraging face-to-face communication between people by informal conferences, workshops, communities of practice, brainstorming and one-to-one sessions.

Hansen *et al* (1999) proposed that the choice of strategy should be contingent on the organization: what it does and how it does it. Thus consultancies such as Ernst & Young, using knowledge to deal with recurring problems, may rely on codification so that recorded solutions to similar problems are easily retrievable. Strategy consultancy firms such as McKinsey or Bains, however, rely on a personalization strategy to help them to tackle the high-level strategic problems they are presented with that demand the provision of creative, analytically rigorous advice. They need to channel individual expertise and they find and develop people who are able to use a person-to-person knowledge-sharing approach. Experts can be identified who can be approached by e-mail, telephone or personal contact.

The research conducted by Hansen *et al* (1999) established that companies that use knowledge well adopt either the codification or the personalization strategy predominantly and use the other strategy to support their first choice. They pointed out that those who try to excel at both strategies risk failing at both.

## Knowledge management issues

The strategies referred to above do not provide easy answers. The issues that need to be addressed in developing knowledge management practices are discussed below.

### The pace of change

One of the main issues in knowledge management is how to keep up with the pace of change

and identify what knowledge needs to be captured and shared.

## Relating knowledge management strategy to business strategy

As Hansen *et al* (1999) showed, it is not knowledge per se but the way it is applied to strategic objectives that is the critical ingredient in competitiveness. They suggested that ‘competitive strategy must drive knowledge management strategy’ and that management have to answer the question: ‘How does knowledge that resides in the company add value for customers?’ (ibid: 114).

## Technology and people

Technology may be central to companies adopting a codification strategy, but for those following a personalization strategy IT is best used in a supportive role. Hansen *et al* (1999: 113) commented that:

In the codification model, managers need to implement a system that is much like a traditional library – it must contain a large cache of documents and include search engines that allow people to find and use the documents they need. In the personalization model, it’s more important to have a system that allows people to find other people.

Scarborough *et al* (1999) suggested that technology should be viewed as a means of communication rather than as a means of storing knowledge. Knowledge management is more about people than technology. Research by Davenport (1996) established that managers get two-thirds of their information from face-to-face or telephone conversations.

There is a limit to how much tacit knowledge can be codified. In organizations relying more on tacit than explicit knowledge, a person-to-person approach works best, and IT can only support this process; it cannot replace it.

## The significance of process

Blackler (1995) emphasized that a preoccupation with technology may mean that too little attention is paid to the processes (social, technological and organizational) through which knowledge combines

and interacts in different ways. The key processes are the interactions between people. This is the social capital of an organization – ‘the network of relationships [that] constitute a valuable resource for the conduct of social affairs’ (Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998: 243). Social networks can be particularly important in ensuring that knowledge is shared. Trust is also required – people are not willing to share knowledge with those they do not trust.

The culture of the company may inhibit knowledge sharing. The norm may be for people to keep knowledge to themselves as much as they can because ‘knowledge is power’. An open culture will encourage people to share their ideas and knowledge.

### Knowledge workers

Knowledge workers, as defined by Drucker (1993), are individuals who have high levels of education and specialist skills combined with the ability to apply these skills to identify and solve problems. As Argyris (1991: 100) commented, they are: ‘The nuts and bolts of management... increasingly consist of guiding and integrating the autonomous but interconnected work of highly skilled people.’ Knowledge management is about the management and motivation of knowledge workers who create knowledge and will be the key players in sharing it.

## The contribution of HR to knowledge management

HR can make an important contribution to knowledge management simply because knowledge is shared between people; it is not just a matter of capturing explicit knowledge through the use of IT. The role of HR is to see that the organization has the intellectual capital it needs. The resource-based view of the firm emphasizes, in the words of Cappelli and Crocker-Hefter (1996: 7), that ‘distinctive human resource practices help to create unique competences

that differentiate products and services and, in turn, drive competitiveness’.

HR can contribute by providing advice on culture management, organization design and development, and by establishing learning and communication programmes and systems. There are 10 ways of doing this:

- 1 Help to develop an open culture in which the values and norms emphasize the importance of sharing knowledge.
- 2 Promote a climate of commitment and trust.
- 3 Advise on the design and development of organizations that facilitate knowledge sharing through networks, teamwork and communities of practice.
- 4 Advise on resourcing policies and provide resourcing services that ensure that valued employees who can contribute to knowledge creation and sharing are attracted and retained.
- 5 Advise on methods of motivating people to share knowledge and rewarding those who do so.
- 6 Help in the development of performance management processes that focus on the development and sharing of knowledge.
- 7 Develop processes of organizational and individual learning that will generate and assist in disseminating knowledge.
- 8 Set up and organize workshops, conferences, seminars, communities of practice and symposia that enable knowledge to be shared on a person-to-person basis.
- 9 In conjunction with IT, develop systems for capturing and, as far as possible, codifying explicit and tacit knowledge.
- 10 Generally, promote the cause of knowledge management with senior managers to encourage them to exert leadership and support knowledge management initiatives.

## Key learning points: Knowledge management

The purpose and significance of knowledge management

Knowledge management is about getting knowledge from those who have it to those who need it in order to improve organizational effectiveness.

Knowledge management strategies

*The codification strategy* – knowledge is carefully codified and stored in databases where it can be accessed and used easily by anyone in the organization. Knowledge is explicit and is codified using a ‘people-to-document’ approach.

*The personalization strategy* – knowledge is closely tied to the person who has developed it and is shared mainly through direct person-to-person contacts. This is a ‘person-to-person’ approach that involves ensuring that tacit knowledge is passed on.

Knowledge management systems

- Creating an intranet.
- Creating ‘data warehouses’.
- Using decision support systems.
- Using ‘groupware’, ie information communication technologies such as e-mail or discussion bases.
- Creating networks or communities of practice or interest of knowledge workers.

Knowledge management issues

- The pace of change.
- Relating knowledge management strategy to business strategy.
- IT is best used in a supportive role.

- Attention must be paid to the processes (social, technological and organizational) through which knowledge combines and interacts in different ways.
- The significance of knowledge workers must be appreciated.

The contribution HR can make to knowledge management

- Help to develop an open culture that emphasizes the importance of sharing knowledge.
- Promote a climate of commitment and trust.
- Advise on the design and development of organizations that facilitate knowledge sharing.
- Ensure that valued employees who can contribute to knowledge creation and sharing are attracted and retained.
- Advise on methods of motivating people to share.
- Help in the development of performance management processes that focus on the development and sharing of knowledge.
- Develop processes of organizational and individual learning that will generate and assist in disseminating knowledge.
- Set up and organize workshops, conferences and communities of practice and symposia that enable knowledge to be shared on a person-to-person basis.
- In conjunction with IT, develop systems for capturing and, as far as possible, codifying explicit and tacit knowledge.
- Generally, promote the cause of knowledge management with senior managers.

## Questions

- 1 What is knowledge management?
- 2 What is knowledge?
- 3 What is the difference between explicit and tacit knowledge?
- 4 What is the distinction between data, information and knowledge?
- 5 What is the purpose of knowledge management?
- 6 How can HR help to promote knowledge management?

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# 07

## Competency-based HRM

### KEY CONCEPTS AND TERMS

Behavioural competencies	Criterion referencing
Behavioural indicators	Emotional intelligence
Competency	Role-specific competencies
Competency-based HRM	Technical competencies
Competency framework	

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

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On completing this chapter you should be able to define these key concepts. You should also understand:

- The meaning of competency-based HRM
- The different types of competencies
- The contents of competency frameworks
- Reasons for using competencies
- Coverage of competencies
- Applications of competency-based HRM
- How to develop a competency framework
- Keys to success in using competencies
- Competencies and emotional intelligence

## Introduction

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Competency-based HRM is about using the notion of competency and the results of competency analysis to inform and improve HR processes, especially those concerned with recruitment and selection, learning and development, and performance and reward management. It has an important part to play in a number of HR activities.

## Competency defined

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The term ‘competency’ refers to an underlying characteristic of a person that results in effective or superior performance. The leading figure in defining and popularizing the concept of competency was Boyatzis (1982). He conducted research that established that there was no single factor but a range of factors that differentiated successful from less successful performance. These factors included personal qualities, motives, experience and behavioural characteristics. Since his contribution, three types of competencies have been identified: behavioural competencies, technical competencies and NVQs/SNVQs.

### **Behavioural competencies**

Behavioural competencies define behavioural expectations, ie the type of behaviour required to deliver results under such headings as teamworking, communication, leadership and decision-making and are sometimes known as ‘soft skills’. Criterion-referencing, ie comparing one measure or situation with a criterion in the form of another measure or outcome, may be used to determine the relationship between them. They can be set out in a ‘competency framework’, which contains definitions of the behavioural competencies used for all employees in an organization or for particular occupations such as managers. Guidelines on defining behavioural competencies are provided in Chapter 51.

### **Technical competencies**

Technical competencies define what people have to know and be able to do (knowledge and skills) in

order to carry out and meet performance expectations and are sometimes known as ‘hard skills’. They are related to either generic roles (groups of similar roles), or to individual roles (‘role-specific competencies’). They are not usually part of a behavioural-based competency framework, although the two are linked when considering and assessing role demands and requirements.

The terms ‘technical competencies’ and ‘competences’ are closely related, although the latter has a particular and more limited meaning when applied to NVQs/SNVQs, as discussed below. Guidelines on defining technical competencies are provided in Chapter 51.

### **NVQ/SNVQ competences**

The concept of competence was conceived in the UK as a fundamental part of the process of developing standards for NVQs/SNVQs. These specify minimum standards for the achievement of set tasks and activities expressed in ways that can be observed and assessed with a view to certification. An element of competence in NVQ language is a description of something that people in a work area should be able to do. They are assessed on being competent or not yet competent. No attempt is made to assess the level of competence.

### **Competency headings**

The most common competencies included in competency in frameworks are people skills, although outcome-based skills, such as focusing on results and solving problems, are also popular. The more common competency headings included in the frameworks of organizations responding to a Competency and Emotional Intelligence survey in 2006/7 are shown in Table 7.1.

The first seven of these were used in over 50 per cent of the respondent organizations. The 49 frameworks included 553 competency headings. No doubt, many of these overlapped. The typical number of competencies was seven, rising to eight where the frameworks applied solely to managers.



**TABLE 7.1** Incidence of different competency headings

Competency heading	Summary definition	% used
Team orientation	The ability to work cooperatively and flexibly with other members of the team with a full understanding of the role to be played as a team member.	86
Communication	The ability to communicate clearly and persuasively, orally or in writing.	73
People management	The ability to manage and develop people and gain their trust and cooperation to achieve results.	67
Customer focus	The exercise of unceasing care in looking after the interests of external and internal customers to ensure that their wants, needs and expectations are met or exceeded.	65
Results orientation	The desire to get things done well and the ability to set and meet challenging goals, create own measures of excellence and constantly seek ways of improving performance.	59
Problem solving	The capacity to analyse situations, diagnose problems, identify the key issues, establish and evaluate alternative courses of action and produce a logical, practical and acceptable solution.	57
Planning and organizing	The ability to decide on courses of action, ensuring that the resources required to implement the action will be available and scheduling the programme of work required to achieve a defined end-result.	51
Technical skills	Possession of the knowledge, understanding and expertise required to carry out the work effectively.	49
Leadership	The capacity to inspire individuals to give of their best to achieve a desired result and to maintain effective relationships with individuals and the team as a whole.	43
Business awareness	The capacity continually to identify and explore business opportunities, understand the business needs and priorities of the organization and constantly to seek methods of ensuring that the organization becomes more businesslike.	37

**TABLE 7.1** Continued

Competency heading	Summary definition	% used
Decision making	The capacity to make sound and practical decisions that deal effectively with the issues and are based on thorough analysis and diagnosis.	37
Change orientation	The ability to manage and accept change.	33
Developing others	The desire and capacity to foster the development of members of his or her team, providing feedback, support, encouragement and coaching.	33
Influence and persuasion	The ability to convince others to agree on or to take a course of action.	33
Initiative	The capacity to take action independently and to assume responsibility for one's actions.	29
Interpersonal skills	The ability to create and maintain open and constructive relationships with others, to respond helpfully to their requests and to be sensitive to their needs.	29
Strategic orientation	The capacity to take a long-term and visionary view of the direction to be followed in the future.	29
Creativity	The ability to originate new practices, concepts and ideas.	26
Information management	The capacity to originate and use information effectively.	26
Quality focus	The focus on delivering quality and continuous improvement.	24
Self-confidence and assertiveness	Belief in oneself and standing up for one's own rights.	24
Self-development	Managing one's own learning and development.	22
Managing	Managing resources, people, programmes and projects.	20

**TABLE 7.2** Example of a basic competency framework

- *Achievement/results orientation.* The desire to get things done well and the ability to set and meet challenging goals, create own measures of excellence and constantly seek ways of improving performance.
- *Business awareness.* The capacity continually to identify and explore business opportunities, understand the business opportunities and priorities of the organization and constantly to seek methods of ensuring that the organization becomes more businesslike.
- *Communication.* The ability to communicate clearly and persuasively, orally or in writing.
- *Customer focus.* The exercise of unceasing care in looking after the interests of external and internal customers to ensure that their wants, needs and expectations are met or exceeded.
- *Developing others.* The desire and capacity to foster the development of members of his or her team, providing feedback, support, encouragement and coaching.
- *Flexibility.* The ability to adapt to and work effectively in different situations and to carry out a variety of tasks.
- *Leadership.* The capacity to inspire individuals to give of their best to achieve a desired result and to maintain effective relationships with individuals and the team as a whole.
- *Planning.* The ability to decide on courses of action, ensuring that the resources required to implement the actions will be available and scheduling the programme of work required to achieve a defined end-result.
- *Problem solving.* The capacity to analyse situations, diagnose problems, identify the key issues, establish and evaluate alternative courses of action and produce a logical, practical and acceptable solution.
- *Teamwork.* The ability to work cooperatively and flexibly with other members of the team with a full understanding of the role to be played as a team member.

## Competency frameworks

Competency frameworks provide the basis for the use of competencies in areas such as recruitment and selection, learning and development, and performance management. They may simply contain definitions of each competency heading as in the example given in Table 7.2.

Some frameworks illustrate these definitions with descriptions of acceptable or unacceptable behaviour, which may be expressed as positive or negative indicators as shown in Table 7.3.

## Using competencies

A number of approaches to using competencies are adopted, as described below.

### The 'menu' approach

A 'menu' approach selects competencies that are relevant to generic or individual roles. Some organizations provide guidelines on the number of competencies to be selected (eg four to eight) and others combine their core framework with a menu so that users are required to select the organization-wide core competencies but can add a number of optional ones.

### Role-specific competencies

Role-specific competencies are also used by some organizations for generic or individual roles. These may be incorporated in a role profile in addition to a statement of key result areas. This approach is adopted in performance management processes, in recruitment person specifications and in the preparation of individual learning programmes.

**TABLE 7.3** Example of competency framework definition with positive and negative indicators

Competency heading	Manage continuous improvement
Competency definition	Constantly seeking ways of improving the quality of services, the relevance and appeal of those services to the needs of customers and clients, and their effectiveness.
Competency requirement	Set targets for improvement. Develop and implement programmes for managing change. Contribute to the development of quality assurance and control processes and ensure that they are implemented.
Positive indicators	Encourages the development of new ideas and methods especially those concerned with the provision of quality. Conscious of the factors that enable change to take place smoothly. Discusses ideas with colleagues and customers and formulates views on how to improve services and processes.
Negative indicators	Doesn't try anything that hasn't been done before. Complacent, believes that there is no room for improvement. Follows previous practices without considering whether there is any need to change.

### Graded competencies

A further, although less common, application of competencies is in graded career or job family structures (career or job families consist of jobs in a function or occupation such as marketing, operations, finance, IT, HR, administration or support services that are related through the activities carried out and the basic knowledge and skills required, but in which the levels of responsibility, knowledge, skill or competence needed differ). In such families, the successive levels in each family are defined in terms of competencies as well as the key activities carried out.

### Applications of competency-based HRM

The Competency and Emotional Intelligence 2006/7 survey found that 95 per cent of respondents used behavioural competencies and 66 per cent used technical competencies. It was noted that because the latter deal with specific activities and tasks they inevitably result in different sets of competencies for groups of related roles, functions or activities. The three top areas where competencies were applied are:

- Recruitment and selection: 85 per cent.
- Learning and development: 82 per cent.
- Performance management: 76 per cent.

Only 30 per cent of organizations linked competencies to reward. The ways in which these competencies are used are described below.

### **Recruitment and selection**

Competencies are used in many organizations as a basis for person specifications set out under competency headings developed through role analysis. The competencies defined for a role are used as the framework for recruitment and selection, and competency-based interviews are structured around the competencies listed in the specification.

### **Learning and development**

Role profiles, which are either generic (covering a range of similar jobs) or individual (role-specific), can include statements of the competencies required. These are used to assess the levels of competency achieved by individuals and so identify their learning and development needs. Learning events can be based on competency analysis related to an organization's competency framework.

Competencies are also used in development centres, which help participants build up their understanding of the competencies they require now and in the future so that they can plan their own self-directed learning programmes.

### **Performance management**

Competencies in performance management are used to ensure that performance reviews do not simply focus on outcomes but also consider the behavioural aspects of how the work is carried out that determine those outcomes. Performance reviews conducted on this basis are used to inform personal improvement and development plans and learning programmes.

### **Reward management**

Competency-related pay relates additional awards to assessments of competency but it has never become popular. However, more frequent use is made of contribution-related pay, which provides for people to be rewarded according to both the results they achieve and their level of competence.

## **Developing a competency framework**

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A competency framework should be as simple to understand and use as possible. The language should be clear and jargon-free. Without clear language and examples it can be difficult to assess the level of competency achieved. When defining competencies, especially if they are used for performance management or competency-related pay, it is essential to ensure that they can be assessed. They must not be vague or overlap with other competencies and they must specify clearly the sort of behaviour that is expected and the level of technical or functional skills (competencies) required to meet acceptable standards. It is helpful to address the user directly ('you will...') and to give clear and brief examples of how the competency needs to be performed.

Developing a behavioural competency framework that fits the culture and purpose of the organization and provides a sound basis for a number of key HR processes is not to be undertaken lightly. It requires a lot of hard work, much of it concerned with involving staff and communicating with them to achieve understanding and buy-in. The steps required are described below.

### **Step 1. Programme launch**

Decide on the purpose of the framework and the HR processes for which it will be used. Make out a business case for its development, setting out the benefits to the organization in such areas as improved performance, better selection outcomes, more focused performance management, employee development and reward processes. Prepare a project plan that includes an assessment of the resources required and the costs.

### **Step 2. Involvement and communication**

Involve line managers and employees in the design of the framework (Steps 3 and 4) by setting up a task force. Communicate the objectives of the exercise to staff.

### Step 3. Framework design – competency list

First, get the task force to draw up a list of the core competencies and values of the business – what it should be good at doing and the values it believes should influence behaviour. This provides a foundation for an analysis of the competencies required by people in the organization. The aim is to identify and define the behaviours that contribute to the achievement of organizational success, and there should be a powerful link between these people competencies and the organization's core competencies (more guidance on defining competencies is provided in Chapter 51).

The list can be drawn up by brainstorming. The list should be compared with examples of other competency frameworks, to avoid replicating other lists. It is essential to produce a competency framework that fits and reflects the organization's own culture, values, core competencies and operations, but referring to other lists will help to clarify the conclusions reached in the initial analysis and serve to check that all relevant areas of competency have been included. When identifying competencies, care must be taken to avoid bias because of sex or race.

### Step 4. Framework design – definition of competencies

Care needs to be exercised to ensure that definitions are clear and unambiguous and that they will serve their intended purpose. If, for example, one of the purposes is to provide criteria for conducting performance reviews, then it is necessary to be certain that the way the competency is defined, together with supporting examples, will enable fair assessments to be made. The following four questions have been produced by Mirabile (1998) to test the extent to which a competency is valid and can be used:

- 1 Can you describe the competency in terms that others understand and agree with?
- 2 Can you observe it being demonstrated or failing to be demonstrated?

- 3 Can you measure it?
- 4 Can you influence it in some way, eg by training, coaching or some other method of development?

It is also important at this stage to ensure that definitions are not biased.

### Step 5. Define uses of the competency framework

Define exactly how it is intended that the competency framework should be used, covering such applications as recruitment and selection, learning and development, performance management and reward.

### Step 6. Test the framework

Test the framework by gauging the reactions of a balanced selection of line managers and other employees to ensure that they understand it and believe that it is relevant to their roles. Also pilot-test the framework in live situations for each of its proposed applications.

### Step 7. Finalize the framework

Amend the framework as necessary following the tests and prepare notes for guidance on how it should be used.

### Step 8. Communicate

Let everyone know the outcome of the project – what the framework is, how it will be used and how people will benefit. Group briefings and any other suitable means should be used.

### Step 9. Train

Give line managers and HR staff training in how to use the framework.

### Step 10. Monitor and evaluate

Monitor and evaluate the use of the framework and amend it as required.

## Keys to success in using competencies

- The competencies should reflect the organization's values and its needs, as established by analysis, to determine the behaviours that will lead to high performance.
- Frameworks should not be overcomplex.
- There should not be too many headings in a framework – seven or eight will often suffice.
- The language used should be clear and jargon-free.
- Competencies must be selected and defined in ways that ensure that they can be assessed

by managers – the use of 'behavioural indicators' is helpful.

- Frameworks should be regularly updated.

## Competencies and emotional intelligence

Emotional intelligence as described fully in Chapter 10 is a combination of skills and abilities such as self-awareness, self-control, empathy and sensitivity to the feelings of others. It covers many of the interpersonal skills included in competency frameworks.

But as Dulewicz and Higgs (1998) pointed out, the concept of emotional intelligence overlaps with that of competency.

### Key learning points: Competency-based HRM

Competency-based HRM is about using the notion of competency and the results of competency analysis to inform and improve HR processes, especially those concerned with recruitment and selection, learning and development, and performance and reward management.

#### Competency defined

The term 'competency' refers to an underlying characteristic of a person that results in effective or superior performance. The different types of competencies are:

- 1 Behavioural competencies define behavioural expectations, ie the type of behaviour required to deliver results under such headings as teamworking, communication, leadership and decision-making.
- 2 Technical competencies define what people have to know and be able to do (knowledge and skills) to carry out their roles effectively.

- 3 NVQ/SNVQ competences specify minimum standards for the achievement of set tasks and activities expressed in ways that can be observed and assessed with a view to certification.

The contents of competency frameworks (the 10 most popular headings)

- 1 team orientation;
- 2 communication;
- 3 people management;
- 4 customer focus;
- 5 results orientation;
- 6 problem solving;
- 7 planning and organizing;
- 8 technical skills;
- 9 leadership;
- 10 business awareness.

### Uses of competencies (2006/7)

- Learning and development: 82 per cent.
- Performance management: 76 per cent.
- Selection: 85 per cent.
- Recruitment: 55 per cent.
- Reward: 30 per cent.

### How to develop a competency framework

- Decide on the purpose of the framework and the HR processes for which it will be used.
- Make out a business case for its development, setting out the benefits.
- Prepare a project plan that includes an assessment of the resources required and the costs.
- Involve line managers and employees in the design of the framework.
- Communicate the objectives of the exercise to staff.
- Draw up a list of the core competencies of the business.
- Define the competencies for inclusion in a competency framework.
- Test and finalize and communicate framework.

### Keys to success in using competencies

- The competencies should reflect the organization's values and its needs, as established by analysis, to determine the behaviours that will lead to high performance.
- Frameworks should not be overcomplex.
- There should not be too many headings in a framework – seven or eight will often suffice.
- The language used should be clear and jargon-free.
- Competencies must be selected and defined in ways that ensure they can be assessed by managers – the use of 'behavioural indicators' is helpful.
- Frameworks should be regularly updated.

### Competencies and emotional intelligence

The emotional intelligence elements of self-awareness, emotional management, empathy, relationships, communication and personal style correspond to competencies such as sensitivity, flexibility, adaptability, resilience, impact, listening, leadership, persuasiveness, motivating others, energy, decisiveness and achievement motivation.

## Questions

- 1 What is competency-based HRM?
- 2 What is a competency?
- 3 What are behavioural competencies?
- 4 What are technical competencies?
- 5 What is the difference between the concepts of competency and competence?
- 6 What is a competency framework?
- 7 What are the main ways in which competencies can be used?

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## 08

# The ethical dimension of HRM

## KEY CONCEPTS AND TERMS

Bounded rationality	Morality
Core values	Natural justice
Deontological ethics theory	Procedural justice
Discourse	Social justice
Distributive justice	Stakeholder theory
Ethics	Utilitarianism
Fair dealing	

## LEARNING OUTCOMES

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On completing this chapter you should be able to define these key concepts. You should also understand:

- The meaning of ethics
- The nature of ethical decisions and judgements
- The ethical concepts of deontology, utilitarianism, stakeholder theory and discourse theory
- The significance of the concepts of equity, justice and fair dealing
- HRM ethical guidelines
- How to resolve ethical dilemmas
- The ethical role of HR

## Introduction

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The theme of this chapter is the importance of recognizing that there is an ethical dimension to human resource management. As Boxall *et al* (2007: 5) pointed out: ‘While HRM does need to support commercial outcomes (often called “the business case”), it also exists to serve organizational needs for social legitimacy.’ This means exercising social responsibility, ie being concerned for the interests (well-being) of employees and acting ethically with regard to the needs of people in the organization and the community.

To grasp this ethical dimension it is necessary to understand the nature and principles of ethics, the ethical role of HR and the ethical guidelines they can use. It is also necessary to know about approaches to resolving ethical dilemmas.

## The meaning and concerns of ethics

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Ethics is defined by the *Compact Oxford Dictionary* as being ‘related to morals, treating of moral questions’, and ethical is defined as ‘relating to morality’. Morality is defined as ‘having moral qualities or endowments’ and moral is defined as ‘of or pertaining to the distinction between right and wrong’. Petrick and Quinn (1997: 42) wrote that ethics ‘is the study of individual and collective moral awareness, judgement, character and conduct’. Hamlin *et al* (2001: 98) noted that ethics is concerned with rules or principles that help us to distinguish right and wrong.

Ethics and morality are sometimes treated as being synonymous, although Beauchamp and Bowie (1983: 1–2) suggested that they are different: ‘Whereas morality is a social institution with a history and code of learnable rules, ethical theory refers to the philosophical study of the nature of ethical principles, decisions and problems.’ Clearly, ethics is concerned with matters of right and wrong and therefore involves moral judgements. Even if ethics and morality are not the same, the two are closely linked. As Clegg *et al* (2007: 111) put it: ‘We understand ethics as the social organizing of morality.’ Simplistically, ethics could be described as being about behaviour while morality is about beliefs.

Ethics is concerned with making decisions and judgements about what is the right course of action to take. It can be described in terms of a framework that sets out different approaches and can be extended to embrace particular concepts that affect and guide ethical behaviour, namely equity, justice and fair dealing. These approaches and concepts are discussed below.

## The nature of ethical decisions and judgements

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As defined by Jones (1991: 367), an ethical decision is one that is morally acceptable to the larger community. He also noted that: ‘A moral issue is present where a person’s actions, when freely performed, may harm or benefit others. In other words, the action or decision must have consequences for others and must involve choice, or volition, on the part of the actor or decision maker’ (ibid: 367).

Winstanley and Woodall (2000a: 8–9) observed that:

Ethics is not about taking statements of morality at face value; it is a critical and challenging tool. There are no universally agreed ethical frameworks... Different situations require ethical insight and flexibility to enable us to encapsulate the grounds upon which competing claims can be made. Decisions are judgements usually involving choices between alternatives, but rarely is the choice between right and wrong... Moral disagreement and judgements are concerned with attitudes and feelings, not facts.

Clegg *et al* (2007: 112) emphasized that: ‘Ethical decisions emerge out of dilemmas that cannot be managed in advance through rules.’ People have to make choices. Foucault (1997: 284) asked: ‘What is ethics, if not the practice of freedom?’

## Ethical frameworks

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The ethical concepts of deontology, utilitarianism, stakeholder theory and discourse theory, as described below, provide frameworks that can be used to evaluate HRM policies and practices.

## Deontological theory

Deontological (from the Greek for ‘what is right’) theory maintains that some actions are right or wrong irrespective of their consequences. It is associated with Kant’s notion of the categorical imperative, which contains two main propositions: a) that one should follow the principle that what is right for one person is right for everyone, and thus you must do to others as you would be done by; and b) in the words of Rawls (1973: 183): ‘We must treat persons solely as ends and not in any way as means.’

## Utilitarianism

Utilitarianism is the belief that the highest principle of morality is to maximize happiness, the overall balance of pleasure against pain. Actions are justified when they result in the greatest good to the greatest number. As Sandel (2010: 33) explained, utilitarianism says that ‘the morality of an action depends solely on the consequences it brings about; the right thing to do will be whatever brings about the best state of affairs.’ In other words, actions should be judged in terms of their results. This can be interpreted as supporting the dubious principle that the end justifies the means – torture is all right as long as it prevents terrorism (NB even if this argument were accepted, the effectiveness of torture as a means of preventing terrorism is highly questionable). Utilitarianism has been criticized first because it fails to respect individual rights and second because, as Michael Sandel explained, it implies that all moral judgements can be translated into a single currency of value, but there is no such thing as a ‘util’.

## Stakeholder theory

In accordance with the ideas of Freeman (1984), stakeholder theory states that the organization should be managed on behalf of its stakeholders: its owners, employees, customers, suppliers and local communities. As Legge (1998: 22) described it, management must act in the interests of the stakeholders as their agent, and also act in the interests of the organization to ensure the survival of the firm, safeguarding the long-term stakes of each group.

## Discourse ethics

Foucault (1972) defined discourse as the taken-for-granted ways that people are collectively able to make sense of experience. Discourse ethics, as explained by Winstanley and Woodall (2000a: 14), suggests that ‘the role of ethicists is not to provide solutions to ethical problems, but rather to provide a practical process and procedure which is both rational and consensus enhancing, through which issues can be debated and discourse can take place’.

## Equity theory

Equity theory, as formulated by Adams (1965), is concerned with the perceptions people have about how they are being treated as compared with others. To be dealt with equitably is to be treated fairly in comparison with another group of people (a reference group) or a relevant other person. Equity involves feelings and perceptions and it is always a comparative process. It is not synonymous with equality, which means treating everyone the same and would be inequitable if they deserve to be treated differently.

## Justice

Justice is the process of treating people in a way that is inherently fair, right and proper. The concept of ‘justice as fairness’ proposed by Rawls (1973: 348) states that ‘natural duties and obligations arise only in virtue of ethical principles’. These principles were expressed by Rawls as follows:

- First: every person is to have the equal right to the most extensive basic liberty comparable with a similar liberty for others.
- Second: social and economic inequalities are to be arranged so that they are both (a) reasonably expected to be to everyone’s advantage, and (b) attached to positions and offices open to all. (ibid: 60)

There are four types of justice: procedural justice, distributive justice, social justice and natural justice.

## Procedural justice

Procedural justice (Adams, 1965; Leventhal, 1980) involves treating people in ways that are fair, consistent, transparent and properly consider their views and needs. In organizations, it is concerned with fair process and the perceptions employees have about the fairness with which company procedures in such areas as performance appraisal, promotion and discipline are being operated. The five factors that affect perceptions of procedural justice, as identified by Tyler and Bies (1990), are:

- Adequate consideration of an employee's viewpoint.
- Suppression of personal bias towards an employee.
- Applying criteria consistently across employees.
- Providing early feedback to employees about the outcome of decisions.
- Providing employees with an adequate explanation of decisions made.

## Distributive justice

Distributive justice (Adams, 1965; Leventhal, 1980) means ensuring that people are rewarded equitably in comparison with others in the organization and in accordance with their contribution, and that they receive what was promised to them (management 'delivers the deal').

## Social justice

Social justice is based on the concepts of human rights and equality. Rawls (1973: 3–4) rejected the principle of utilitarianism when he asserted that in society: 'Each person possesses an inviolability founded on justice that even the welfare of society as a whole cannot override. For this reason justice denies that the loss of freedom for some is made right by a greater good shared by others.' In organizations, social justice means relating to employees generally in ways that recognize their natural rights to be treated justly, equitably and with respect.

## Natural justice

According to the principles of natural justice employees should know the standards they are expected to achieve and the rules to which they are expected to conform. They should be given a clear indication of where they are failing or what rules have been broken and, except in cases of gross misconduct, they should be given a chance to improve before disciplinary action is taken.

## HRM ethical guidelines

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The guidelines set out below relate to how employees are treated in general and to the major HRM activities of organization development, recruitment and selection, learning and development, performance management, reward management and employee relations. They also relate to employment practices concerning the work environment, employee well-being, equal opportunities, managing diversity, handling disciplinary matters and grievances, job security and redundancy.

### General guidelines

- Recognize that the strategic goals of the organization should embrace the rights and needs of employees as well as those of the business.
- Recognize that employees are entitled to be treated as full human beings with personal needs, hopes and anxieties.
- Do not treat employees simply as means to an end or mere factors of production.
- Relate to employees generally in ways that recognize their natural rights to be treated justly, equitably and with respect.

### Organization development (OD)

- Agree in advance with clients and individuals the goals, content and risks of an OD programme.

- Make explicit any values or assumptions used in the programme.
- Obtain the maximum involvement of all concerned in the programme so that they understand the processes involved and how they can benefit from them.
- Work with clients to plan and implement change to the benefit of all stakeholders.
- Enable individuals to continue with their development on completing the programme.
- Protect confidentiality.

### Recruitment and selection

- Treat candidates with consideration – applications should be acknowledged, candidates should be kept informed without undue delay of decisions made about their application, and they should not be kept waiting for the interview.
- Avoid intrusive or hectoring questioning in interviews.
- Do not put candidates under undue stress in interviews.
- Do not criticize any aspect of the candidate's personality or experience.
- Use relevant selection criteria based on a proper analysis of job requirements.
- Give candidates reasonable opportunity to present their case and to ask questions.
- Avoid jumping to conclusions about candidates on inadequate evidence or as a result of prejudice.
- Give accurate and complete information to candidates about the job, prospects, security and terms and conditions of employment.
- Only use properly validated tests administered by trained testers.
- Do not use discriminating or biased tests.
- Monitor tests for impact and unintended bias.
- Ensure that candidates are not unfairly disadvantaged by testing processes.
- Give candidates feedback on test results unless there are compelling reasons why feedback should not be given.

- Ensure that selection decisions are free of discrimination or bias on the grounds of sex, sexual orientation, race, age or disability.
- Give unsuccessful candidates the reason for the decision if they request it.

### Learning and development

- Respect individual rights for dignity, self-esteem, privacy and autonomy.
- Recognize that it is necessary and legitimate to provide individuals with learning opportunities that enable them to gain the knowledge and skills required to perform well in their jobs and develop their potential. But note that individuals should still be allowed autonomy to choose the extent to which they pursue learning and development programmes beyond this basic requirement.
- Accept that while the organization has the right to conduct learning and development activities that enhance performance, individuals also have the right to be provided with opportunities to develop their own knowledge, skills and employability.
- Ensure that people taking part in learning events feel 'psychologically safe' in accordance with the view expressed by Schein (1993: 91) that: 'To make people feel safe in learning, they must have a motive, a sense of direction, and the opportunity to try out new things without the fear of punishment.'
- Avoid manipulating people to accept imposed organizational values.

### Performance management

Performance management ethical principles have been defined by Winstanley and Stuart-Smith (1996) as follows:

- *Respect for the individual* – people should be treated as 'ends in themselves' and not merely as 'means to other ends'.
- *Mutual respect* – the parties involved in performance management should respect each other's needs and preoccupations.

- *Procedural fairness* – the procedures incorporated in performance management should be operated fairly in accordance with the principles of procedural justice.
- *Transparency* – people affected by decisions emerging from performance management processes should have the opportunity to scrutinize the basis upon which decisions were made.

## Reward management

- Generally apply the principles of procedural and distributive justice.
- Ensure that reward policies and practices are fair, equitable and transparent and that they are applied consistently.
- Reward people according to their contribution.
- Ensure that people know in general the basis upon which rewards are provided and in particular how their own reward package is determined.
- Maintain reasonable and defensible pay differentials.
- Ensure that equal pay is provided for work of equal value.
- Base decisions about performance pay or bonuses on fair and equitable criteria.
- Avoid bonus schemes that encourage undesirable behaviour.
- Do not pay less than the living wage (in the UK in July 2013 it was £7.45 per hour outside London compared with £6.19 for the statutory minimum wage).

## Employee relations

- Deliver the deal.
- Be open to employees' input and responsive to justifiable questions and concerns about employment policies and practices.
- Provide genuine opportunities and channels for employees to express their views and influence decisions on matters that affect them.
- Negotiate in good faith.

- Recognize that the interests of management and employees do not necessarily coincide and develop and implement employee relations policies accordingly.

## Employment practices

- Create a healthy, safe and fulfilling work environment.
- Promote the well-being of employees by improving the quality of working life provided for them, enhancing work-life balance and developing family-friendly policies.
- Take particular care to minimize the stress to which employees may be subjected.
- Provide equal opportunities for all with regard to recruitment and selection, learning and development, talent management, career progression and promotion.
- Manage diversity by recognizing the differences between people and ensuring that everyone feels valued and that the talents of all employees will be properly utilized.
- Handle disciplinary matters according to the principles of natural justice.
- Recognize that people may have legitimate grievances and respond to them promptly, fully and sympathetically.
- Preserve job security as far as possible and take alternative action to avoid compulsory redundancies.
- If compulsory redundancy is unavoidable, do whatever is possible to alleviate the distress by, for example, helping people to find work.
- Do not allow whistle-blowers who expose wrongdoing to be penalized.

## Ethical dilemmas

'Ethics will be enacted in situations of ambiguity where dilemmas and problems will be dealt with without the comfort of consensus or certitude' (Clegg *et al*, 2007: 109). Bauman, quoted in Bauman

and Tester (2001: 44), commented that: ‘Morality concerns choice first of all – it is the predicament human beings encounter when they must make a selection amongst various possibilities.’ And Derrida (1992) observed that ethical responsibility can exceed rational calculation.

## Resolving ethical dilemmas

As Adam Smith (1759) wrote in *The Theory of Modern Sentiments* (quoted by Harrison, 2009: 246): ‘When ethically perplexed, the question we should always ask is: would a disinterested observer, in full possession of the relevant facts, approve or disapprove of our actions?’ This guidance is just as compelling and relevant today.

Woodall and Winstanley (2000: 285) suggested that ‘being ethical is not so much about finding one universal principle to govern all action, but more about knowing how to recognize and mediate between often unacknowledged differences of view’. By definition, an ethical dilemma is one that will be difficult to resolve. There may be all sorts of issues surrounding the situation, some of which will be unclear or contentious. The extent to which people react or behave rationally may be limited by their capacity to understand the complexities of the situation they are in and affected by their emotional reactions to it (the concept of bounded rationality). As Harrison (2009: 331) explained:

Some of the factors that militate against a purely ‘rational’ approach include confused, excessive, incomplete or unreliable data, incompetent processing or communicating of information, pressures of time, human emotions, and differences in individuals’ cognitive processes, mental maps and reasoning capacity.

Faced with factors such as these the process of ethical dilemma resolution can be hard going.

There is no ‘one right way’ to deal with an ethical issue, but an approach based on systematic questioning, analysis and diagnosis to get at the facts and establish the issues involved is more likely to produce a reasonably satisfactory outcome than one relying purely on ‘gut feeling’. The following checklist – used judiciously and selectively according to the circumstances – can provide a basis for such questioning and analysis.

### Checklist – dealing with ethical issues

- What are the known facts about the situation and is it possible that there are facts or circumstances that have not come to light, and if so what can be done to uncover them?
- In disciplinary or conduct cases, to what extent does the conduct contravene the organization’s code of ethical conduct (if one exists) or any other relevant organizational policy guidelines and rules?
- In disciplinary cases, are there any mitigating circumstances?
- Have different versions or interpretations of the facts and circumstances been offered and, if so, what steps can be taken to obtain the true and full picture?
- Do the facts as established and confirmed justify the proposed action?
- Is the proposed action in line with both the letter and the spirit of the law?
- Is the proposed action and any investigations leading to it consistent with the principles of natural, procedural or distributive justice?
- Will the proposed action benefit the organization and if so how?
- Is there any risk of the proposed action doing harm to the organization’s reputation for fair dealing?
- Will the proposed action be harmful to the individual affected or to employees generally in any way and if so how?

## The ethical role of HR

Legge (1998: 20–21) commented that: ‘In very general terms I would suggest that the experience of HRM is more likely (but not necessarily) to be viewed positively if its underlying principles are ethical.’ HR professionals have a special responsibility for guarding and promoting core values in



the organization on how people should be managed and treated. They need to take action to achieve fair dealing. This means treating people according to the principles of procedural, distributive, social and natural justice, and seeing that decisions or policies that affect them are transparent in the sense that they are known, understood, clear and applied consistently.

Kochan (2007: 600) suggested that: 'HR derives its social legitimacy from its ability to serve as an effective steward of a social contract in employment relationships capable of balancing and integrating the interests and needs of employers, employees and the society in which these relationships are embedded.' But he also noted that most HR professionals have 'lost any semblance of credibility as stewards of the social contract because most HR professionals have lost their ability to seriously challenge or offer an independent perspective on the policies and practices of the firm' (ibid: 604). And, Parkes and Davis (2013: 2427) pointed out the risk that the HR role can become 'rather passive, favouring communicating standards rather than actively promoting ethical behaviour'.

To overcome this problem and thus fulfil an ethical role Winstanley and Woodall (2000b: 7) remarked that: 'HR professionals have to raise awareness of ethical issues, promote ethical behaviour, disseminate ethical practices widely among line managers, communicate codes of ethical conduct, ensure people learn about what constitutes ethical behaviours, manage compliance and monitor arrangements.'

There are three approaches that HR can adopt. The first is to ensure that HR policies and the actions taken to implement them meet acceptable ethical standards. HR can press for the production of a value statement that sets out how the organization intends to treat its employees. Value statements may be set out under such headings as care and consideration for people, belief that people should be treated justly and equitably and belief that the views of employees about matters that concern them should be listened to.

This requires advocacy skills to persuade management to adopt and act on these policies and the courage and determination to make out the ethical case even when management favours a conflicting business case. But value statements are meaningless until the values are put into practice; the ethical role of HR involves helping to ensure that this takes place.

Second, HR practitioners can act as role models, leading by example and living and breathing good ethical behaviour. As a respondent to the survey conducted by Parkes and Davis (2013: 2426) commented: 'If HR does not act ethically, how can it expect employees to do so?'

The third approach, and the hardest, is to challenge unethical behaviour on the part of management. Such behaviour can take many forms, including management tolerance for exploitation and bullying; the lack of a whistle-blowing policy, which provides routes for reporting malpractice and performance management criteria that emphasize organizational gain over all else. The latter was the case at the Royal Bank of Scotland (RBS) before the financial crisis, where the performance management concentrated on target achievement, ignoring behaviour. The courage to challenge is less likely to be forthcoming in organizations where the culture is one of command and control – and obedience is expected to whatever is dictated by management (features of the pre-crash RBS culture). Power, politics and culture shape norms of behaviour and, as Herb Kelleher (the CEO of Southwest Airlines) put it, culture is 'what people do when no one is looking' (reported by Lee, 1994). One respondent to the Parkes and Davis survey (2013: 2425) commented: 'It can be difficult on a personal level to be speaking out – HR do not have the power'. Another said: 'Speaking out can be career suicide'. It is too easy in these circumstances for HR to be mere bystanders. Neil Roden, former head of HR at RBS, explained HR's position in relation to the financial debacle at the bank as follows: 'I'm not absolving myself totally... (but) I can't see what HR could have done... I wasn't running the bank... the CEO makes the decisions, not me. HR is a support function, no more, no less important than sales or IT.'

An HR director who is a member of an executive board can question decisions from an ethical viewpoint but if the comments are not heeded then the director will either have to accept the decision or resign. It is important to challenge – and the courage to do so is listed by the CIPD as one of the qualities required by an HR professional. But it is difficult and there may be limits to what HR can do. If HR professionals cannot do anything about the way their organization does things they either have to carry on and do whatever they can in other less confrontational ways, or they must leave.



## Key learning points: The ethical dimension of HRM

### Ethics and morality defined

Ethics is defined by the *Compact Oxford Dictionary* as being 'related to morals, treating of moral questions', and ethical is defined as 'relating to morality'. Morality is defined as 'having moral qualities or endowments' and moral is defined as 'of or pertaining to the distinction between right and wrong'. Simplistically, ethics could be described as being about behaviour while morality is about beliefs.

Ethics is concerned with making ethical decisions and judgements. It can be described in terms of an ethical framework that sets out different approaches and can be extended to embrace particular concepts that affect and guide ethical behaviour, namely equity, justice and fair dealing. An ethical decision is one that is morally acceptable to the larger community.

### Ethical concepts

The ethical concepts of deontology, utilitarianism, stakeholder theory and discourse theory provide frameworks that can be used to evaluate HRM policies and practices.

An important role for HR professionals is to do whatever they can to embed the consistent application of ethical values in the organization so that they can become values in use rather than simply professed values in a code of practice or values statement.

### Ethical guidelines

Ethical guidelines set out how employees are treated in general, and to the major HRM activities of organization development, recruitment and selection, learning and development, performance management, reward management, employee relations, and employment practices concerning the work environment, employee well-being, equal opportunities, managing diversity, handling disciplinary matters and grievances, job security and redundancy.

### Handling ethical dilemmas

There is no 'one right way' to deal with an ethical dilemma but an approach based on systematic questioning, analysis and diagnosis to get at the facts and establish the issues involved is more likely to produce a reasonably satisfactory outcome than one relying purely on 'gut feeling'. An ethical dilemma is one that will be difficult to resolve. There may be all sorts of issues surrounding the situation, some of which will be unclear or contentious.

### The role of HR

HR professionals have a special responsibility for guarding and promoting core values in the organization on how people should be managed and treated generally. They are particularly concerned with values relating to just and fair treatment. They can act as role models and challenge unethical practices. But challenging can be difficult.

## Questions

- 1 What are ethics?
- 2 What is the nature of ethical judgements?
- 3 What is the deontological theory of ethics?
- 4 What is the utilitarian theory of ethics?
- 5 What is stakeholder theory?
- 6 What is procedural justice?
- 7 What is distributive justice?
- 8 What is the ethical dimension of HRM?
- 9 What are commonly accepted general guidelines on HR ethical behaviour?
- 10 How should ethical dilemmas be dealt with?

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# 09

# Corporate social responsibility

## KEY CONCEPTS AND TERMS

Corporate social responsibility (CSR)

Stakeholder theory

Strategic CSR

Value statement

## LEARNING OUTCOMES

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On completing this chapter you should be able to define these key concepts. You should also understand:

- The meaning of corporate social responsibility (CSR)
- CSR activities
- CSR strategy
- Developing a CSR strategy
- The rationale for CSR

## Introduction

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The notion that businesses should act in a socially responsible way by practising ‘corporate social responsibility’ (CSR) has been around for some time. J M Keynes wrote in 1923 that: ‘The business man is only tolerable so long as his gains can be held to bear some relation to what, roughly and in some sense, his activities have contributed to society.’ The aim of this chapter is to explore what CSR means as a concept and a strategy. The rationale for CSR is also considered – the arguments in favour are overwhelming, but reference is made also to powerful opposing views.

HR professionals, because of the ethical dimension of their function (as described in Chapter 8), have an important role to play in furthering CSR. CSR was justified by the CIPD (2009: 1) as a relevant and important HR activity because:

CSR needs to be embedded in an organization’s culture to make a change to actions and attitudes, and the support of the top team is critical to success. HR already works at communicating and implementing ideas, policies, cultural and behavioural change across organizations. Its role in influencing attitudes and links with line managers and the top team means it is ideally placed to do the same with CSR.

HR professionals need to marshal the arguments in favour of CSR, as set out in this chapter, to overcome any overt or covert resistance. They must be able to advise on CSR strategies and how they can be implemented. This is not an easy task and suggestions on the approaches that can be adopted are made in the concluding section of the chapter.

## Corporate social responsibility defined

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Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is exercised by organizations when they conduct their business in an ethical way, taking account of the social, environmental and economic impact of how they operate, and going beyond compliance. Wood (1991: 695) stated that: ‘The basic idea of corporate social responsibility is that business and society are interwoven rather than distinct entities; therefore, society

has certain expectations for appropriate business behaviour and outcomes.’ As Baron (2001: 11) noted, CSR involves ‘providing to others benefits beyond those generated by economic transactions with the firm or required by law’.

McWilliams *et al* (2006: 1) stated that CSR refers to the actions taken by businesses ‘that further some social good beyond the interests of the firm and that which is required by law’. CSR has also been described by Husted and Salazar (2006: 76) as being concerned with ‘the impact of business behaviour on society’ and by Porter and Kramer (2006: 83) as a process of integrating business and society. The latter argued that to advance CSR: ‘We must root it in a broad understanding of the interrelationship between a corporation and society while at the same time anchoring it in the strategies and activities of specific companies.’

CSR is concerned generally with how companies function and this includes how they manage their people. The CIPD (2003: 5) emphasized that ‘the way a company treats its employees will contribute directly to the picture of a company that is willing to accept its wider responsibilities’.

CSR policy may be expressed in a value statement that sets out the organization’s core values under such headings as:

- care and consideration for people;
- competence;
- competitiveness;
- customer service;
- innovation;
- performance;
- quality;
- teamwork.

But espoused values are pointless unless they become values in use and this needs concerted action by management working with employees and supported by HR.

## Strategic CSR defined

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Strategic CSR is about deciding initially the degree to which the firm should be involved in social issues and then creating a corporate social agenda

– considering what social issues to focus on and to what extent. As Porter and Kramer (2006: 85) observed: ‘It is through strategic CSR that the company will make the greatest social impact and reap the greatest business benefits.’ They also observed that strategy is always about choice – organizations that ‘make the right choices and build focused, proactive and integrated social initiatives in concert with their core strategies will increasingly distance themselves from the pack’ (ibid: 91).

CSR strategy needs to be integrated with the business strategy but it is also closely associated with HR strategy. This is because it is concerned with socially responsible behaviour both outside and within the firm – with society generally and with the internal community. In the latter case this means creating a working environment where personal

and employment rights are upheld and HR policies and practices provide for the fair and ethical treatment of employees.

## CSR activities

CSR activities as listed by McWilliams *et al* (2006) include incorporating social characteristics or features into products and manufacturing processes, adopting progressive HRM practices, achieving higher levels of environmental performance through recycling and pollution abatement, and advancing the goals of community organizations. The information set out below was obtained by Business in the Community research.

### Source review

The CSR activities of 120 leading British companies – Business in the Community (2007)

- *Community* – skills and education, employability and social exclusion were frequently identified as key risks and opportunities. Other major activities were support for local community initiatives and being a responsible and safe neighbour.
- *Environment* – most companies reported climate change and resource-use as key issues for their business: 85 per cent of them managed their impacts through an environmental management system.
- *Marketplace* – the issues most frequently mentioned by companies were research and development, procurement and supply chain, responsible selling, responsible marketing and product safety. There was a rising focus on fair treatment of customers, providing appropriate product information and labelling, and on the impacts of products on customer health.
- *Workplace* – this was the strongest management performing area as most companies have established employment management frameworks that can cater for workplace issues as they emerge. Companies recognized the crucial role of employees to achieve responsible business practices. Emphasis was placed on internal communications and training in order to raise awareness and understanding of why CSR is relevant to them and valuable for the business. More attention was paid to health and well-being issues as well as the traditional safety agenda. More work was done on diversity, both to ensure the business attracts a diverse workforce and to communicate the business case for diversity internally.

Business in the Community also reported a growing emphasis on responsible business as a source of competitive advantage as firms move beyond minimizing

risk to creating opportunities. A survey conducted by Industrial Relations Services (Egan, 2006) found that:

- most employers believe that employment practices designed to ensure the fair and ethical treatment of staff can boost recruitment and retention;
- relatively few employers are strongly convinced of a positive link to business performance or productivity;
- the issue of ethics in employment is often viewed as part of a broader social responsibility package;
- policies on ethical employment most commonly cover HR practice in the areas of recruitment, diversity, redundancy/dismissal proceedings and employee involvement.

## The rationale for CSR

Stakeholder theory, as first propounded by Freeman (1984), suggests that managers must satisfy a variety of constituents (eg workers, customers, suppliers, local community organizations) who can influence firm outcomes. According to this view, it is not sufficient for managers to focus exclusively on the needs of shareholders or the owners of the business. Stakeholder theory implies that it can be beneficial for the firm to engage in certain CSR activities that non-financial stakeholders perceive to be important.

The rationale for CSR, as defined by Hillman and Keim (2001), is based on two propositions. First, there is a moral imperative for businesses to 'do the right thing' without regard to how such decisions affect firm performance (the social issues argument); second, firms can achieve competitive advantage by tying CSR activities to primary stakeholders (the stakeholders argument). Their research in 500 firms implied that investing in stakeholder management may be complementary to shareholder value creation and could indeed provide a basis for competitive advantage as important resources and capabilities are created that differentiate a firm from its competitors. However, participating in social issues beyond the direct stakeholders may adversely affect a firm's ability to create shareholder wealth. Strong arguments for CSR were made by Porter and Kramer (2006).

### Source review

Arguments supporting CSR –  
Porter and Kramer (2006)

- 1 *The moral appeal* – the argument that companies have a duty to be good citizens. The US business association Business for Social Responsibility (2007) asks its members 'to achieve commercial success in ways that honour ethical values and respect people, communities and the natural environment'.
- 2 *Sustainability* – an emphasis on environmental and community stewardship. This involves meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.
- 3 *Licence to operate* – every company needs tacit or explicit permission from government, communities and other stakeholders to do business.
- 4 *Reputation* – CSR initiatives can be justified because they improve a company's image, strengthen its brand, enliven morale and even raise the value of its stock.

Moran and Ghoshal (1996: 45) contended that 'what is good for society does not necessarily have to be bad for the firm, and what is good for the firm does not necessarily have to come at a cost to society. Value creation, rather than value appropriation, lies at the heart of effective firm strategies.'

## The opposing view

The opposing view is that businesses are there to make a profit, not to exercise social responsibility. The marketing expert Theodore Levitt (1958: 41), in an article in the *Harvard Business Review* on the dangers of social responsibility, posed the questions: 'Are top executives being taken in by pretty words

and soft ideas? Are they letting the country in for a nightmare return to feudalism by forgetting that they must be businessmen first, last and almost always?’ He did write that CSR can be used as ‘a way of maximizing the lifetime of capitalism by taking the wind out of its critics’ sails’ (ibid: 43). But, writing as an unstructured capitalist, he suggested that: ‘The essence of free enterprise is to go after profit in any way that is consistent with its own survival as an economic system’ (ibid: 44).

The Chicago monetarist Milton Friedman (1962: 133–34) questioned the ability of business managers to pursue the social interest. He asked:

If businessmen do have a social responsibility other than making maximum profits for stockholders, how are they to know what it is? Can self-selected private individuals decide what the social interest is? Can they decide how great a burden they are justified in placing on themselves or their stockholders to serve that social interest?

In 1970 Friedman argued that the social responsibility of business is to maximize profits within the bounds of the law. He maintained that the mere existence of CSR was an agency problem within the firm in that it was a misuse of the resources entrusted to managers by owners, which could be better used on value-added internal projects or returned to the shareholders.

These outspoken views may no longer be supported so openly but they still exist and are still acted on. There is much evidence that CSR is not on the agenda – for example, UK banks that made money by selling worthless investments or insurance policies and then failed to respond adequately to complaints. And, less egregiously, a glance at the ‘Your Problems’ column in the *Observer* reveals plenty of instances of businesses indulging in antisocial behaviour. It is necessary, therefore, to have a convincing case for the benefits of CSR.

## Benefits of CSR

Benefits from CSR listed by the CIPD (2003: 4) include, ‘offering distinctive positioning in the market place, protecting reputation, building credibility and trust with customers and employees, redefining corporate purpose or mission and securing the company’s licence to operate’.

Much research has been conducted into the relationship between CSR and firm performance. For example, Russo and Fouts (1997) found that there was a positive relationship between environmental performance and financial performance. Hillman and Keim (2001) established that if the socially responsible activity were directly related to primary stakeholders, then investments may benefit not only stakeholders but also result in increased shareholder wealth. However, participation in social issues beyond the direct stakeholders may adversely affect a firm’s ability to create such wealth.

## The basis for developing a CSR strategy

The basis for developing a CSR strategy is provided by the following competency framework of the CSR Academy (2006), which is made up of six characteristics:

- 1 *Understanding society* – understanding how business operates in the broader context and knowing the social and environmental impact that the business has on society.
- 2 *Building capacity* – building the capacity of others to help manage the business effectively. For example, suppliers understand the business’s approach to the environment and employees can apply social and environmental concerns in their day-to-day roles.
- 3 *Questioning business as usual* – individuals continually questioning the business in relation to a more sustainable future and being open to improving the quality of life and the environment.
- 4 *Stakeholder relations* – understanding who the key stakeholders are and the risks and opportunities they present. Working with them through consultation and taking their views into account.
- 5 *Strategic view* – ensuring that social and environmental views are included in the business strategy so that they are integral to the way the business operates.
- 6 *Harnessing diversity* – respecting that people are different, which is reflected in fair and transparent business practices.



## Developing and implementing a CSR strategy

To develop and implement a CSR strategy based on these principles it is necessary to:

- understand the business and social environment in which the firm operates;
- understand the business and HR strategies and how the CSR strategy should be aligned to them;
- know who the stakeholders are (including top management) and find out their views on and expectations of CSR;
- produce and deliver persuasive arguments in favour of CSR: if all else fails suggest that there is room for enlightened self-interest that involves doing well by doing good;
- identify the areas in which CSR activities might take place by reference to their relevance in the business context of the organization and an evaluation of their significance to stakeholders;
- prioritize as necessary on the basis of an assessment of the relevance and significance of CSR to the organization and its stakeholders and the practicalities of introducing the activity or practice;
- draw up the strategy and make the business case for it to top management and the stakeholders;
- obtain approval for the CSR strategy from top management and key stakeholders;
- communicate information on the whys and wherefores of the strategy, comprehensively and regularly;
- provide training to employees on the skills they need in implementing the CSR strategy;
- measure and evaluate the effectiveness of CSR.

### Key learning points: Corporate social responsibility

#### The meaning of CSR

CSR activities include incorporating social characteristics or features into products and manufacturing processes, adopting progressive HRM practices, achieving higher levels of environmental performance through recycling and pollution abatement, and advancing the goals of community organizations.

#### The rationale for CSR

There are two arguments for CSR (Hillman and Keim, 2001): first, there is a moral imperative for businesses to 'do the right thing' without regard to how such decisions affect firm performance (the social issues argument); second, firms can achieve competitive advantage by tying CSR activities to primary stakeholders (the stakeholders argument).

#### Developing a CSR strategy

- Identify the areas in which CSR activities might take place by reference to their relevance in the business context of the organization and an evaluation of their significance to stakeholders.
- Prioritize as necessary on the basis of an assessment of the relevance and significance of CSR to the organization and its stakeholders and the practicalities of introducing the activity or practice.
- Draw up the strategy and make the case for it to top management and the stakeholders to obtain their approval.
- Communicate information on the strategy, comprehensively and regularly.
- Provide training to employees on the skills they need to use in implementing the CSR strategy.



## Questions

- 1 Is it necessary to have a business case for CSR and, if so, what is it?
- 2 What is the role of HR in promoting CSR?
- 3 What sort of approaches to CSR can an organization adopt?

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# PART II

## People and organizations

### PART II CONTENTS

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- 10 Organizational behaviour
- 11 Work, organization and job design
- 12 Organization development

### Introduction

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Human resource management policies and practices need to be based on an understanding of the factors that affect the behaviour of people in organizations. The purpose of this part of the book is to outline a basic set of concepts and to provide analytical tools that will enable HR specialists to diagnose organizational behaviour and to take appropriate actions.

The part starts in Chapter 10 with a general analysis of the concept of organizational behaviour, the term used to describe: 1) how organizations function with regard to their structure, processes and culture; 2) the characteristics of people and how

they act in organizations, individually or in groups. Organizational behaviour theory is based on the main behavioural science theories, which have been proved by research. Like all proven theories it provides insights into good practice. Thus it provides guidance on the design of work systems, organizations and jobs, as discussed in Chapter 11, and approaches to organization development (the systematic process of improving organizational capability, which is concerned with process – how things get done) in Chapter 12. It also provides the conceptual framework for approaches to achieving the motivation, commitment and engagement of people, as considered in Part III of this handbook.

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# 10

# Organizational behaviour

## KEY CONCEPTS AND TERMS

Behavioural science	Matrix organization
Bounded rationality	Motivation
Cognitive dissonance	Organic organization
Emotional intelligence	Organization
Equity theory	Organizational behaviour
Expectancy theory	Organizational culture
Extrinsic motivation	Organizational effectiveness
Goal theory	Organizing
Intelligence	Personality
Intrinsic motivation	Psychological contract
Lattice organization	Self-efficacy
Line and staff organization	Virtual organization

## LEARNING OUTCOMES

On completing this chapter you should be able to define these key concepts. You should also know about:

- What is meant by organizational behaviour
- The sources and applications of organizational behaviour theory
- How organizations function
- Organizational culture
- Organizational climate
- Organizational processes
- Characteristics of people
- Implications for HR specialists

## Introduction

An understanding of how organizations function and how people behave in them is important to HR professionals, indeed to all managers, as pointed out by Nadler and Tushman (1980).

### Source review

The significance of organizational behaviour theory – Nadler and Tushman (1980: 30)

Managers perform their jobs within complex social systems called organizations. In many senses, the task of the manager is to influence behaviour in a desired direction, usually towards the accomplishment of a specific task or performance goal. Given this definition of the managerial role, skills in the diagnosis of patterns of organizational behaviour become vital. Specifically, the manager needs to understand the patterns of behaviour that are observed, predict in what direction behaviour will move (particularly in the light of managerial action), and to use this knowledge to control behaviour over the course of time.

## Organizational behaviour defined

Organizational behaviour was defined by Huczynski and Buchanan (2007: 843) as the term used to describe ‘the study of the structure, functioning, and performance of organizations and the behaviour of groups and individuals within them’. The following are the characteristics of organizational behaviour theory.

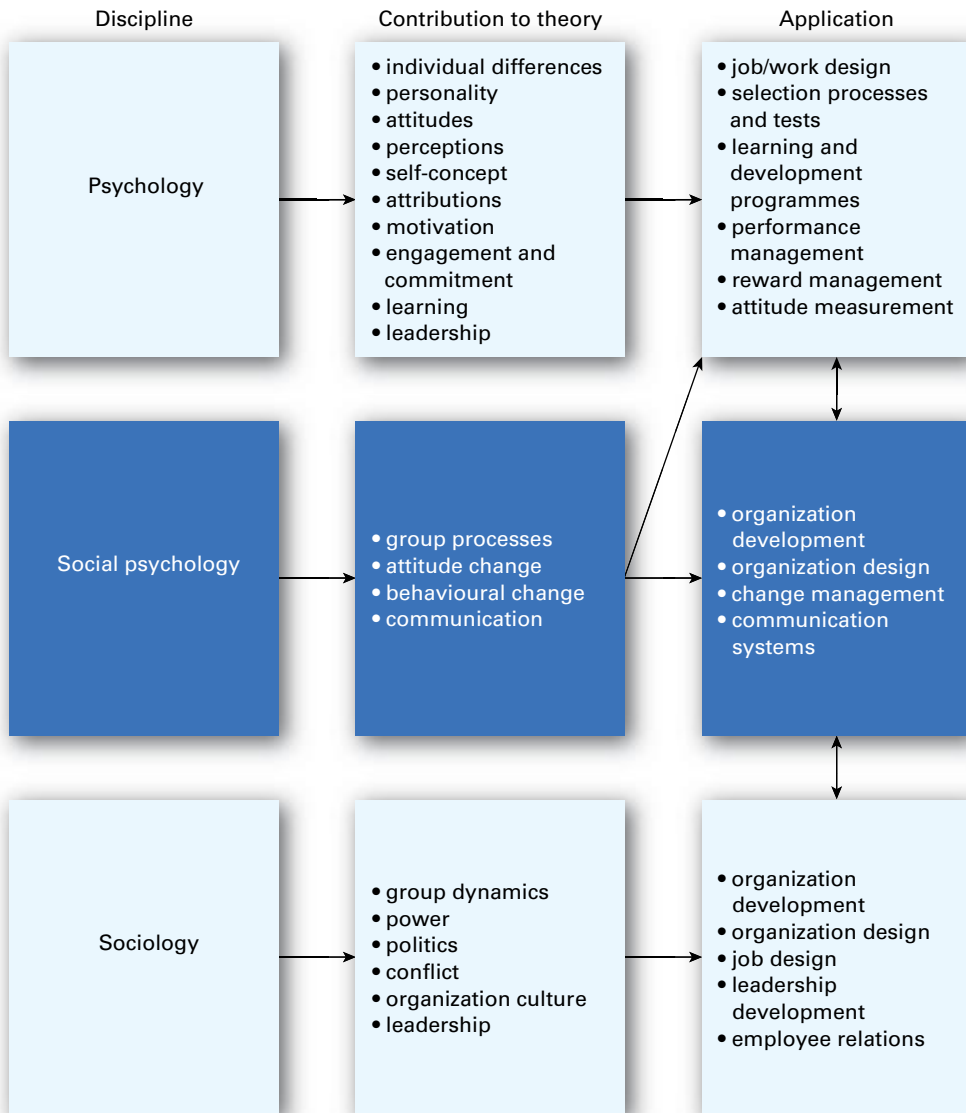
### Source review

Characteristics of organizational behaviour – Ivancevich *et al* (2008: 11)

- It is a way of thinking – about individuals, groups and organizations.
- It is multidisciplinary – it uses principles, models, theories and methods from other disciplines.
- There is a distinctly humanistic orientation – people and their attitudes, perceptions, learning capacities, feelings and goals are of major importance.
- It is performance-oriented – it deals with the factors affecting performance and how it can be improved.
- The use of scientific method is important in studying variables and relationships.
- It is applications-oriented in the sense of being concerned with providing useful answers to questions that arise when managing organizations.

## The sources and applications of organizational behaviour theory

Organizational behaviour theory is based on the main behavioural science disciplines. These are defined as the fields of enquiry dedicated to the study of human behaviour through sophisticated and rigorous methods. The ways in which they contribute to different aspects of organizational behaviour theory and how they in turn influence HRM practices are summarized in Figure 10.1.

**FIGURE 10.1** The sources and applications of organizational behaviour theory

## How organizations function

An organization is an entity that exists to achieve a purpose through the collective efforts of the people who work in or for it. Organizing is the process of making arrangements in the form of defined or understood responsibilities and relationships to enable those people to work cooperatively together. Organizations can be described as systems that, as

affected by their environment, have a structure that has both formal and informal elements.

Organization structures are frameworks for getting things done. Traditional formal structures were based on laid down hierarchies (lines of command) represented in organization charts, and use was made of closely defined job descriptions. But to varying extents organizations operate informally as well as formally by means of a network of roles and relationships

that cut across formal organizational boundaries and lines of command. Organization structures can evolve almost spontaneously as circumstances change and new activities have to be carried out.

## Factors affecting how organizations function

The processes that take place in organizations – interaction and networking, leadership, group behaviour, the exercise of power and the use of politics – may well have much more effect on how organizations function than can be shown in a defined organization chart supported by elaborate job descriptions and an organization manual. Moreover, the way in which an organization functions will be largely contingent on its purpose, technology, methods of working and external environment. A number of theories have been developed, summarized in Table 10.1, to explain how organizations function, culminating in the contingency and post-bureaucratic schools that now predominate.

## Types of organization

The main types of organization are described briefly below:

- *Line and staff* – a traditional organization based on the military model in which a hierarchy of ‘line managers’ carry out the fundamental operations such as manufacturing, sales or customer service while the ‘staff’ functions such as finance and personnel provides them with services, advice and support.
- *Mechanistic* – a formal organization that is hierarchical with rigid chains of command and control, distinct departments and tightly defined and specialized jobs (usually a characteristic of a line and staff organization).
- *Organic* – a relatively informal organization with a non-hierarchical, flat structure where the emphasis is on horizontal processes, the elimination of boundaries between functions,

**TABLE 10.1** Schools of organization theory

School	Leading exponents	Summary of theory
The classical school	Taylor (1911), Fayol (1916), Urwick (1947)	Organizations need control, measurement, order and formality to function well. They have to minimize the opportunity for unfortunate and uncontrollable informal relations, leaving room only for the formal ones.
The human relations school	Barnard (1938), Roethlisberger and Dickson (1939)	Barnard emphasized the importance of the informal organization – the network of informal roles and relationships that, for better or worse, strongly influences the way the formal structure operates. In their analysis of the Hawthorne studies Roethlisberger and Dickson stressed the importance of informal groups and decent, humane leadership.
The behavioural science school	Argyris (1957), Herzberg <i>et al</i> (1957), McGregor (1960), Likert (1961), Schein (1965)	A humanistic point of view is adopted that is concerned with what people can contribute and how they can best be motivated.



**TABLE 10.1** Continued

School	Leading exponents	Summary of theory
The bureaucratic model	Weber (1908) translated in 1947	Max Weber coined the term 'bureaucracy' as a label for a type of formal organization in which impersonality and rationality are developed to the highest degree. Bureaucracy, as he conceived it, was the most efficient form of organization because it was logical and because personalized relationships and non-rational, emotional considerations do not get in its way.
The socio-technical model	Emery (1959), Trist <i>et al</i> (1963)	In any system of organization, technical or task aspects are interrelated with the human or social aspects. The emphasis is on interrelationships between, on the one hand, the technical processes of transformation carried out within the organization and, on the other hand, the organization of work groups and the management structures of the enterprise.
The systems school	Miller and Rice (1967)	Organizations should be treated as open systems that are continually dependent upon and influenced by their environments. The basic characteristic of the enterprise as an open system is that it transforms inputs into outputs within its environment.
The contingency school	Burns and Stalker (1961), Woodward (1965), Lawrence and Lorsch (1969)	Members of the contingency school analysed a variety of organizations and concluded that their structures and methods of operation are a function of the circumstances in which they exist. They do not subscribe to the view that there is one best way of designing an organization or that simplistic classifications of organizations as formal or informal, bureaucratic or non-bureaucratic are helpful.
The post-bureaucratic school	Pascale (1990), Ghoshal and Bartlett (1995)	Rather than seeing organizations as a hierarchy of static jobs, members of the post-bureaucratic school think of them as a portfolio of dynamic processes that overlay and often dominate the vertical, authority-based processes of the hierarchical structure. The emphasis is on 'horizontal tasks', collaboration and networking across units rather than on 'vertical tasks' within functional units. Hence the concept of the 'boundaryless organization'.

teamwork and flexible roles (also known as a lattice organization).

- *Matrix organization* – an organization that consists of a functional structure with a number of different disciplines and a project structure consisting of project teams drawn from the disciplines.
- *Network organization* – a collection of interrelated organizations that extends beyond the boundaries of any single organization.
- *Virtual organization* – an organization that mainly uses electronic means for its members to interact with one another thus minimizing face-to-face contacts.

## Organizational culture

The culture of an organization has been described by Deal and Kennedy (2000: 4) as ‘the way we do things around here’. It is more complex than that, as other definitions given below indicate. But this simplistic definition at least demonstrates that it is an all-pervading notion that affects the way in which people behave and has to be taken into account as a contingency factor in any programme for developing organizations and HR policies and practices. Organizational culture offers a shared system of meanings which is the basis for communications and mutual understanding. If these functions are not fulfilled in a satisfactory way, culture may significantly reduce the effectiveness of an organization. This is why it is important for HR specialists to understand the concept of organizational culture and how it affects organizations.

### Organizational culture defined

Organizational or corporate culture is the pattern of values, norms, beliefs, attitudes and assumptions that may not have been articulated but shape the ways in which people in organizations behave and things get done. ‘Values’ refer to what is believed to be important about how people and organizations behave. ‘Norms’ are the unwritten rules of behaviour.

This definition emphasizes that organizational culture is concerned with the subjective aspect of what goes on in organizations. It refers to abstractions such as values and norms that pervade the whole or part of a business, which may not be defined, discussed or even noticed. Nevertheless, culture can have a significant influence on people’s behaviour. The following are some other definitions of organizational culture:

- A strong culture is a system of informal rules that spells out how people are to behave most of the time. (Deal and Kennedy, 2000: 15)
- The culture of an organization refers to the unique configuration of norms, values, beliefs and ways of behaving that characterize the manner in which groups and individuals combine to get things done. (Eldridge and Crombie, 1974: 89)
- Organizational culture offers a shared system of meanings that is the basis for communications and mutual understanding. (Furnham and Gunter, 1993: 70–71)
- Culture is a pattern of basic assumptions – invented, discovered or developed by a given group as it learns to cope with the problems of external adaptation and internal integration – that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think and feel in relation to these problems. (Schein, 1990: 110)

### How organizational culture develops

The values and norms that are the basis of culture are formed in four ways. First, by the leaders in the organization, especially those who have shaped it in the past. Schein (1990) indicates that people identify with visionary leaders – how they behave and what they expect. They note what such leaders pay attention to and treat them as role models. Second, as Schein also points out, culture is formed around critical incidents – important events from which lessons are learnt about desirable or undesirable behaviour. Third, culture develops from the need to maintain effective working relationships

among organization members that establishes values and expectations. Finally, culture is influenced by the organization's environment, which may tend to be dynamic or unchanging.

Culture evolves over time as a result of shared experiences. Schein (1984) suggested that this is a learning process which takes place either through the trauma model, in which members of the organization learn to cope with some threat by the erection of defence mechanisms, or by means of the positive reinforcement model, where things that seem to work become embedded and entrenched. Learning takes place as people adapt to and cope with external pressures, and as they develop successful approaches and mechanisms to handle the internal challenges, processes and technologies in their organization. Where culture has developed over long periods of time and has become firmly embedded it may be difficult to change quickly, if at all, unless a traumatic event occurs.

### **The diversity of culture**

The development process described above may result in a culture that characterizes the whole organization. But there may be different cultures within organizations. For example, the culture of an outward-looking marketing department may be substantially different from that of an internally focused manufacturing function. There may be some common organizational values or norms, but in some respects these will vary between different work environments.

### **The components of culture**

Organizational culture can be described in terms of values, norms, artefacts and management or leadership style.

#### **Values**

Values are beliefs in what is best or good for the organization and what should or ought to happen. The 'value set' of an organization may only be recognized at top level, or it may be shared throughout the business, in which case the business could be described as value-driven.

The stronger the values the more they will influence behaviour. This does not depend upon their

having been articulated. Implicit values that are deeply embedded in the culture of an organization and are reinforced by the behaviour of management can be influential, while espoused values that are mere rhetoric and are not reflected in managerial behaviour may have little or no effect. When values are acted on they are called 'values in use'. Examples are listed below.

#### **Areas in which values may be expressed – explicitly or implicitly**

- Care and consideration for people.
- Competence.
- Competitiveness.
- Customer service.
- Innovation.
- Performance.
- Quality.
- Teamwork.

Values may be expressed through norms and artefacts, as described below. They may also be expressed through the media of language (organizational jargon), rituals, stories and myths.

#### **Norms**

Norms are the unwritten rules of behaviour, the 'rules of the game' that provide informal guidelines on how to behave. Norms tell people what they are supposed to be doing, saying, believing, even wearing. They are never expressed in writing – if they were, they would be policies or procedures. They are passed on by word of mouth or behaviour and can be enforced by the reactions of people if they are violated. They can exert very powerful pressure on behaviour because of these reactions – we control others by the way we react to them.

### Typical norms

- How managers treat the members of their teams (management style) and how the latter relate to their managers. The prevailing work ethic, eg 'work hard, play hard', 'come in early, stay late', 'if you cannot finish your work during business hours you are obviously inefficient', 'look busy at all times', 'look relaxed at all times'.
- Status – how much importance is attached to it; the existence or lack of obvious status symbols.
- Ambition – naked ambition is expected and approved of, or a more subtle approach is the norm.
- Performance – exacting performance standards are general; the highest praise that can be given in the organization is to be referred to as 'very professional'.
- Power – recognized as a way of life; executed by political means, dependent on expertise and ability rather than position; concentrated at the top; shared at different levels in different parts of the organization.
- Politics – rife throughout the organization and treated as normal behaviour; not accepted as overt behaviour.
- Loyalty – expected, a cradle-to-grave approach to careers; discounted, the emphasis is on results and contribution in the short term.
- Anger – openly expressed; hidden, but expressed through other, possibly political, means.
- Approachability – managers are expected to be approachable and visible; everything happens behind closed doors.
- Formality – a cool, formal approach is the norm; forenames are/are not used at all levels; there are unwritten but clearly understood rules about dress.

### Artefacts

Artefacts are the visible and tangible aspects of an organization that people hear, see or feel and which contribute to their understanding of the organization's culture. Artefacts can include such things as the working environment, the tone and language used in e-mails, letters or memoranda, the manner in which people address each other at meetings or over the telephone, the welcome (or lack of welcome) given to visitors and the way in which receptionists deal with outside calls. Artefacts can be very revealing.

### Management style

The approach managers use to deal with people – their management or leadership style – is a significant part of the culture of an organization. Management style can be described in terms of the following extremes:

charismatic	↔	non-charismatic
autocratic	↔	democratic
controller	↔	enabler
transactional	↔	transformational

Most managers adopt an approach somewhere between the extremes. Some will vary it according to the situation or their feelings at the time; others will stick to the same style whatever happens. Every manager has his or her own style but this will be influenced by the organizational culture, which may produce a prevailing management style that represents a behavioural norm for managers that is generally expected and adopted.

### **Classifying organizational culture**

There have been many attempts to classify or categorize organizational cultures as a basis for analysis and for taking action to support or change them. Most of these classifications are expressed in four dimensions; three of the best-known ones are summarized below. Note that following the lead of Harrison (1972), there is much common ground between them.

### Harrison (1972) – organization ideologies

- *Power-oriented* – competitive, responsive to personality rather than expertise.
- *People-oriented* – consensual, management control rejected.
- *Task-oriented* – focus on competency, dynamic.
- *Role-oriented* – focus on legality, legitimacy and bureaucracy.

### Handy (1981) – culture typology

- The *power culture* is one with a central power source that exercises control. There are few rules or procedures and the atmosphere is competitive, power-oriented and political.
- The *role culture* in which work is controlled by procedures and rules and the role, or job description, is more important than the person who fills it. Power is associated with positions not people.
- The *task culture* in which the aim is to bring together the right people and let them get on with it. Influence is based more on expert power than in position or personal power. The culture is adaptable and teamwork is important.
- The *person culture* in which the individual is the central point. The organization exists only to serve and assist the individuals in it.

### Appropriate cultures

It is not possible to say that one culture is better than another, only that a culture is to a greater or lesser extent appropriate in the sense that it is relevant to the needs and circumstances of the organization and helps rather than hinders its performance. However, embedded cultures can exert

### Schein (1984) – classification of cultures

- *Power culture* in which leadership resides in a few and rests on their ability and tends to be entrepreneurial.
- *Role culture* in which power is balanced between the leader and the bureaucratic structure. The environment is likely to be stable and roles and rules are clearly defined.
- *Achievement culture* in which personal motivation and commitment are stressed and action, excitement and impact are valued.
- *Support culture* in which people contribute out of a sense of commitment and solidarity.

considerable influence on organizational behaviour. If there is an appropriate and effective culture it would therefore be desirable to take steps to support or reinforce it. If the culture is inappropriate attempts should be made to determine what needs to be changed and to develop and implement plans for change. A culture will be more effective if it is consistent in its components and shared amongst organizational members, and if it makes the organization unique, thus differentiating it from other organizations.

### Organizational climate

As defined by Harrison and Shirom (1999: 263), organizational climate refers to ‘members’ perceptions of organizational features such as decision-making, leadership and norms about work’. Ivancevich *et al* (2008: 528) described organizational climate as: ‘A set of properties of the work environment, perceived directly or indirectly by the employees, that is assumed to be a major force in influencing employee behaviour.’

The term ‘organizational climate’ is sometimes confused with ‘organizational culture’ and there has been much debate on what distinguishes them from one another. In Denison’s (1996) analysis of this issue, he suggested that ‘culture’ refers to the deep

structure of organizations, which is rooted in the values, beliefs and assumptions held by organizational members. In contrast, 'climate' refers to those aspects of the environment that are consciously perceived by organizational members. Rousseau (1988) stated that climate is a perception and is descriptive. Perceptions are sensations or realizations experienced by an individual. Descriptions are what a person reports of these sensations.

The debate about the meanings of these terms can become academic. It is easiest to regard organizational climate as how people perceive (see and feel about) the culture existing in their organization. French *et al* (1985) distinguish between the actual situation (ie culture) and the perception of it (ie climate).

## Organizational processes

A number of social processes take place in organizations that affect how they function. These are: interaction and networking, communication, group behaviour, leadership, power, politics and conflict.

### Interaction and networking

Interactions between people criss-cross the organization, creating networks for getting things done and exchanging information that is not catered for in the formal structure. 'Networking' is an increasingly important process in flexible and delayered organizations where more fluid interactions across the structure are required between individuals and teams. Networking means that people canvass opinion and enlist support to promote their projects or ideas. In this way they may get more done than by going through formal channels. People also get things done in organizations by creating alliances – getting agreement on a course of action with other people and joining forces to put the proposed action into effect.

### Communications

The communications processes used in organizations have a marked effect on how it functions, especially if they take place through the network, which can then turn into the 'grapevine'. E-mails encourage

the instant flow of information (and sometimes produce information overload) but may inhibit face-to-face interactions, which are often the best ways of doing things.

### Group behaviour

Organizations consist of groups or teams of people working together. They may be set up formally as part of the structure or they may be informal gatherings. A group can be a permanent or a temporary feature in an organization. Interactions take place within and between groups and the degree to which these processes are formalized varies according to the organizational context.

Formal groups or teams are created by organizations to achieve a defined purpose. People are brought together with the necessary skills to carry out the tasks and a system exists for directing, coordinating and controlling the group's activities. Informal groups are set up by people in organizations who have some affinity for one another. It could be said that formal groups satisfy the needs of the organization while informal groups satisfy the needs of their members.

Groups develop an ideology that affects the attitudes and actions of their members and the degree of satisfaction they feel. If the group ideology is strong and individual members identify closely with the group, it will become increasingly cohesive. Group norms or implicit rules will be evolved that define what is acceptable behaviour and what is not. This is described as a 'reference group', which consists of the group of people with whom an individual identifies. The individual accepts the group's norms and, if in doubt about what to do or say, reference is made to these norms or to other group members before action is taken. Most people in organizations belong to a reference group and this can significantly affect the ways in which they behave.

Four stages of group development were identified by Tuckman (1965):

- 1 *Forming*, when there is anxiety, dependence on the leader and testing to find out the nature of the situation and the task, and what behaviour is acceptable.
- 2 *Storming*, where there is conflict, emotional resistance to the demands of the task, resistance to control and even rebellion against the leader.



- 3 *Norming*, when group cohesion is developed, norms emerge, views are exchanged openly, mutual support and cooperation increase and the group acquires a sense of its identity.
- 4 *Performing*, when interpersonal problems are resolved, roles are flexible and functional, there are constructive attempts to complete tasks and energy is available for effective work.

## Leadership

Organizations largely function by means of managers and supervisors who exercise leadership in order to get their teams into action and ensure that they achieve the results expected of them. Goleman (2000) reported that a study by Hay McBer of 3,871 executives, selected from a database of more than 20,000 executives worldwide, established that leadership had a direct impact on organizational climate, and that climate in turn accounted for nearly one-third of the financial results of organizations. The conclusion from research conducted by Higgs (2006) was that leadership behaviour accounts for almost 50 per cent of the difference between change success and failure. Research by Northouse (2006) into 167 US firms in 13 industries established that over a 20-year period leadership accounted for more variations in performance than any other variable. Leadership skills are described in Chapter 55.

## Power

Organizations exist to get things done; in the process of doing this, people or groups exercise power. Directly or indirectly, the use of power in influencing behaviour is a pervading feature of organizations, whether it is exerted by managers, specialists, informal groups or trade union officials. It is a way of achieving results, but it can be misused.

## Politics

Political behaviour is an inevitable feature of organizational life. The aim of organizational politicians is to get their own way by influencing people to accept their point of view without going through the usual

channels or relying on their authority. Some individuals genuinely believe that the best way to get something done is by using political means, especially when they are frustrated by the normal decision processes. Others unashamedly pursue their own ends. Political behaviour can be harmful when it is underhand and devious, but it can sometimes help to enlist support and overcome obstacles to getting results. All managers need political skills, as described in Chapter 59, but, because of the nature of their role, such skills are particularly important for HR specialists.

## Conflict

Conflict is also inevitable in organizations because they function by means of adjustments and compromises among competitive elements in their structure and membership. Conflict also arises when there is change, because it may be seen as a threat to be challenged or resisted, or when there is frustration. Conflict is not always deplorable. It can be a result of progress and change and it can be used constructively.

## Characteristics of people

To manage people effectively, it is necessary to take into account the factors that affect how they behave at work. The development of HR processes and the design of organizations are often predicated on the belief that everyone is the same and that they will behave rationally when faced with change or other demands. But the behaviour of people differs because of their characteristics and individual differences and it is not always rational.

The management of people would be much easier if everyone were the same, but they are not. As discussed below, they are, of course, different because of variations in personal characteristics and the influence of their background (the way in which they were brought up). Some people also consider sex, race or disability as factors that affect people's behaviour at work, although holding this view readily leads to discrimination. In addition, there will be differences in ability, intelligence and personality.

## Variations in personal characteristics

The headings under which personal characteristics can vary have been classified by Mischel (1968) as follows.

### Source review

Variations in personal characteristics – Mischel (1968)

- *Competencies* – abilities and skills.
- *Constructs* – the conceptual frameworks which govern how people perceive their environment.
- *Expectations* – what people have learnt to expect about their own and others' behaviour.
- *Values* – what people believe to be important.
- *Self-regulatory plans* – the goals people set themselves and the plans they make to achieve them.

These characteristics are affected by environmental or situational variables, which include the type of work individuals carry out; the culture, climate and management style in the organization; the social group within which they work; and the 'reference groups' individuals use for comparative purposes (eg comparing conditions of work or pay between one category of employee and another).

The personal characteristics that affect people's behaviour at work, as discussed below, are their ability, intelligence, personality, attitudes, emotions and emotional intelligence.

## Ability

Ability is the quality possessed by people that makes an action possible. Abilities have been analysed by Burt (1954) and Vernon (1961). They classified them into two major groups: V:ed – verbal, numerical, memory and reasoning abilities; and K:m – spatial

and mechanical abilities, as well as perceptual (memory) and motor skills relating to physical operations such as eye/hand coordination and mental dexterity.

They also suggested that overriding these abilities there is general mental ability (GMA), which accounts for most variations in performance. Following a meta-analysis of 85 years of research findings, Schmidt and Hunter (1998) established that GMA was the most valid predictor of future performance and learning for selecting people without previous experience.

## Intelligence

Intelligence has been variously defined as:

- The capacity to solve problems, apply principles, make inferences and perceive relationships. (Argyle, 1989: 53)
- The capacity for abstract thinking and reasoning with a range of different contents and media. (Toplis *et al*, 2004: 20)
- What is measured by intelligence tests. (Wright and Taylor, 1970: 31)

The last, tautological definition is not facetious. As an operational definition, it can be related to the specific aspects of reasoning, inference, cognition (ie knowing, conceiving) and perception (ie understanding, recognition), which intelligence tests attempt to measure.

General intelligence (GI) consists of a number of mental abilities that enable a person to succeed at a wide variety of intellectual tasks that use the faculties of knowing and reasoning. It can be measured by an intelligence test and is sometimes expressed as an intelligence quotient (IQ), which is the ratio of an individual's mental age to the individual's actual age as measured by an intelligence test.

The concept of emotional intelligence (as described later) stresses that emotional maturity – in the sense of the ability to identify, assess and manage the emotions of one's self and others – is also important.

## Personality

Personality has been defined by Huczynski and Buchanan (2007: 138) as: 'The psychological qualities that influence an individual's characteristic



behaviour patterns in a stable and distinctive manner.’ As noted by Ivancevich *et al* (2008), personality appears to be organized into patterns that are, to some degree, observable and measurable and involves both common and unique characteristics – every person is different from every other person in some respects but similar to other people in other respects. Personality is a product of both nature (hereditary) and nurture (the pattern of life experience). Personality can be described in terms of traits or types.

## Traits

Traits are predispositions to behave in certain ways in a variety of different situations. The leading model of personality traits is the following ‘big five’ classification (Costa and McCrae, 1992; Digman, 1990):

- *Openness* – inventive/curious or consistent/cautious.
- *Conscientiousness* – efficient/organized or easy-going/careless.
- *Extraversion* – outgoing/energetic or solitary/reserved.
- *Agreeableness* – friendly/compassionate or cold/unkind.
- *Neuroticism* – sensitive/nervous or secure/confident.

The assumption that people are consistent in the ways they express these traits is the basis for making predictions about their future behaviour. We all attribute traits to people in an attempt to understand why they behave in the way they do. But people do not necessarily express the same trait across different situations or even the same trait in the same situation. Different people may exhibit consistency in some traits and exhibit considerable variability in others.

## Types

Type theories of personality identify a number of types of personality that can be used to categorize people and may form the basis of a personality test. The types may be linked to descriptions of various traits. One of the most widely used type theories is that of Jung (1923). He identified four major preferences:

- relating to other people – extraversion or introversion;
- gathering information – sensing (dealing with facts that can be objectively verified), or intuitive (generating information through insight);
- using information – thinking (emphasizing logical analysis as the basis for decision-making), or feeling (making decisions based on internal values and beliefs);
- making decisions – perceiving (collecting all the relevant information before making a decision), or judging (resolving the issue without waiting for a large quantity of data).

This is the basis of personality tests such as the Myers-Briggs Types Indicator.

Types should be distinguished from traits. As Huczynski and Buchanan (2007: 142) put it: ‘Type approaches fit people into categories possessing common behaviour patterns. A personality trait, on the other hand, is an enduring behaviour that occurs in a variety of settings. While individuals belong to types, traits belong to individuals.’

## Attitudes

An attitude can broadly be defined as a settled mode of thinking. Attitudes are evaluative. They are developed through experience but they are less stable than traits and can change as new experiences are gained or influences absorbed. Within organizations they are affected by cultural factors (values and norms); the behaviour of management (management style); policies such as those concerned with pay, recognition, promotion and the quality of working life; and the influence of the ‘reference group’ (the group with whom people identify). Sometimes there may be a discrepancy between attitudes and behaviour, ie someone may believe in one thing – such as being fair to people – but act differently. This is called ‘cognitive dissonance’.

## Emotions

Emotions are feelings that arouse people and therefore influence their behaviour such as anger, fear, sadness, joy, anticipation and acceptance. The mildest forms of emotions are called ‘moods’, which are low intensity, long-lasting emotional states.

## Emotional intelligence

The notion of emotional intelligence was first defined by Salovey and Mayer (1990), who proposed that it involves the capacity to perceive emotion, integrate emotion in thought, understand emotion and manage emotions effectively. Goleman (1995) popularized the concept. He defined emotional intelligence as: ‘The capacity for recognizing our own feelings and that of others, for motivating ourselves, for managing emotions well in ourselves as well as others.’ He suggested that its four components are:

- 1 *Self-management* – the ability to control or redirect disruptive impulses and moods and regulate own behaviour coupled with a propensity to pursue goals with energy and persistence. The six competencies associated with this component are self-control, trustworthiness and integrity, initiative, adaptability – comfort with ambiguity, openness to change and strong desire to achieve.
- 2 *Self-awareness* – the ability to recognize and understand your moods, emotions and drives as well as their effect on others. This is linked to three competencies: self-confidence, realistic self-assessment and emotional self-awareness.
- 3 *Social awareness* – the ability to understand the emotional make-up of other people, and skill in treating people according to their emotional reactions. This is linked to six competencies: empathy, expertise in building and retaining talent, organizational awareness, cross-cultural sensitivity, valuing diversity, and service to clients and customers.
- 4 *Social skills* – proficiency in managing relationships and building networks to get the desired result from others and reach personal goals, and the ability to find common ground and build rapport. The five competencies associated with this component are: leadership, effectiveness in leading change, conflict management, influence/communication, and expertise in building and leading teams.

According to Goleman, it is not enough to have a high IQ; emotional intelligence is also required.

Since Goleman’s contribution, three major models of emotional intelligence, as summarized by Clarke (2007), have dominated thinking in this area:

- *Personality models* have become the most popular theory of emotional intelligence following Goleman. Here, emotional intelligence is viewed as comprising a range of emotional dispositions as well as competencies, from individual traits to a number of learnt capabilities. These are all contained within the components of emotional intelligence listed above.
- *Mixed models* comprise aspects of personality as well as abilities to perceive emotional intelligence and manage emotions.
- *The ability model* views emotional intelligence more narrowly as a set of four cognitive abilities that involve the capacity to identify, reason with, and utilize emotions effectively.

As Clarke comments, the first two models have come under criticism in terms of the ambiguity associated with the areas included and the measurement approaches employed. The ability model has received more positive commentary as possessing greater validity.

## Critical evaluation of the concept of emotional intelligence

The notion that there is more to being effective as a manager or working with people than having a high IQ is persuasive. What matters is how that intelligence is used, especially when relating to people. The term ‘emotional intelligence’ has become a convenient and recognizable label for this requirement: someone who is poor at dealing with people is described as lacking in emotional intelligence.

Instruments are available for measuring emotional intelligence such as the Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire (Petrides and Furnham, 2000). On the basis of such questionnaires, learning and development programmes can be created for individuals or groups, which focus on any weaknesses revealed.

But doubts have been expressed about the notion of emotional intelligence. Locke (2005: 426), a well-respected occupational psychologist, made the following observation:

The concept of emotional intelligence has now become so broad and the components so variegated that no one concept could possibly encompass or integrate all of them, no matter what the concept was called; it is no longer even an intelligible concept. What is the common or integrating element in a concept that includes: introspection about emotions, emotional expression, non-verbal communication with others, empathy, self-regulation, planning, creative thinking and the direction of attention? There is none.

He suggested that emotional intelligence should be renamed as a skill.

Goleman's mixed model of emotional intelligence, although the most popular, has been heavily criticized. Mayer *et al* (2008) described it as mere 'pop psychology'. There is also the question of whether the concept of emotional intelligence adds anything significant to that of behavioural competencies. Dulewicz and Higgs (1999) have produced a detailed analysis of how the emotional intelligence elements of self-awareness, emotional management, empathy, relationships, communication and personal style correspond to competencies such as sensitivity, flexibility, adaptability, resilience, impact, listening, leadership, persuasiveness, motivating others, energy, decisiveness and achievement motivation. They conclude that there are distinct associations between competency modes and elements of emotional intelligence. There is a danger of confusion if emotional intelligence notions and competency frameworks overlap.

## Implications for HR specialists

The main implications of organizational behaviour theory for HR specialists are summarized below.

### **How organizations function**

When involved in organization design bear in mind that, while the highly structured classical model with clearly defined roles and lines of control and communication may appear to be the ideal solution, in practice organizations function differently. It is necessary to take into account the post-bureaucratic

school and think of the organization as a portfolio of dynamic processes that overlay and often dominate the vertical, authority-based processes of the hierarchical structure. Similarly, organizational development activities should be based on an analysis and understanding of these dynamic processes.

### **Organizational culture**

While it may not be possible to define an ideal culture or to prescribe how it can be developed, it can at least be stated with confidence that embedded cultures exert considerable influence on organizational behaviour and therefore performance. If there is an appropriate and effective culture it is desirable to take steps to support or reinforce it. If the culture is inappropriate, attempts should be made to determine what needs to be changed and to develop and implement plans for change (approaches to culture management are described in Chapter 12). HR innovations need to take account of the culture in which they will operate. They are likely to fail if they are countercultural.

### **Organizational climate**

The perceptions of employees about the organization, which form the organization climate, need to be assessed and understood so that action can be taken to deal with negative factors. Diagnostic tools, as described in Chapter 12, can be used for this purpose.

### **Organizational processes**

The social processes of interaction and networking, communication, group behaviour, leadership, power, politics and conflict need to be understood and considered when considering ways of improving organizational effectiveness (the ability of an organization to achieve its goals by making effective use of the resources available to it). Social and political factors can affect how HR decisions are made and how well they are implemented.

### **Individual differences**

When designing jobs, preparing learning and development programmes, assessing and counselling staff,

developing reward systems and dealing with grievances and disciplinary problems, it is necessary to remember that all people are different. What fulfils or motivates one person may not fulfil or motivate another. Abilities, aptitudes and intelligence differ widely and it is necessary to take particular care in fitting the right people in the right jobs and giving them the right training. Personalities, attitudes and emotions also differ. It is important to focus on how to manage diversity. This should take account of individual differences, which will include any issues arising from the employment of women, people from different ethnic groups, those with disabilities and older people. The predictive effectiveness of GMA tests as selection aids should be noted.

## Judgements on personality

Personality should not be judged or measured simplistically in terms of stereotyped traits. People are complex and they change, and account has to be taken of this. The problem for HR specialists and managers in general is that, while they have to accept and understand these differences and take full account of them, they have ultimately to proceed on the basis of fitting them to the requirements of the situation, which are essentially what the organization needs to achieve. There is always a limit to the extent to which an organization that relies on collective effort to achieve its goals can adjust itself to the specific needs of individuals. But the organization has to appreciate that the pressures it places on people can result in stress and therefore can become counterproductive.

### Key learning points: Organizational behaviour

People perform their roles within complex systems called organizations. The study of organizational behaviour focuses on how this happens.

#### Organizational behaviour defined

Organizational behaviour was defined by Huczynski and Buchanan (2007) as the term used to describe 'the study of the structure, functioning, and performance of organizations and the behaviour of groups and individuals within them'.

#### The sources and applications of organizational behaviour theory

Organizational behaviour theory is based on the main behavioural science disciplines. These are defined as the fields of enquiry dedicated to the study of human behaviour through sophisticated and rigorous methods.

#### How organizations function

- An organization is an entity that exists to achieve a purpose through the collective efforts of the people who work in or for it.

- Organizing is the process of making arrangements in the form of defined or understood responsibilities and relationships to enable those people to work cooperatively together.
- Organizations can be described as systems that, as affected by their environment, have a structure that has both formal and informal elements.
- Organization structures are frameworks for getting things done.
- Traditional formal structures were based on laid-down hierarchies (lines of command) represented in organization charts, and use was made of closely defined job descriptions. But to varying extents organizations operate informally as well as formally by means of a network of roles and relationships that cut across formal organizational boundaries and lines of command.

#### Organizational culture

The culture of an organization has been described by Deal and Kennedy (2000: 4) as 'the way we do things around here'. Organizational or corporate culture is the pattern of values, norms, beliefs, attitudes and

assumptions that may not have been articulated but shape the ways in which people in organizations behave and the ways in which things get done.

### How organizational culture develops

The values and norms that are the basis of culture are formed in four ways:

- 1 By the leaders in the organization, especially those who have shaped it in the past.
- 2 Around critical incidents – important events from which lessons are learnt about desirable or undesirable behaviour.
- 3 From the need to maintain effective working relationships among organization members; this establishes values and expectations.
- 4 Influenced by the organization's environment. The external environment may be relatively dynamic or unchanging.

### The components of culture

Organizational culture can be described in terms of values, norms, artefacts and management style.

### Classifying organizational culture (Harrison, 1972):

- Power-oriented – competitive, responsive to personality rather than expertise.
- People-oriented – consensual, management control rejected.
- Task-oriented – focus on competency, dynamic.
- Role-oriented – focus on legality, legitimacy and bureaucracy.

### Appropriate cultures

It is not possible to say that one culture is better than another, only that a culture is to a greater or lesser extent appropriate in the sense that it is relevant to the needs and circumstances of the organization and helps rather than hinders its performance.

### Organizational climate

As defined by Harrison and Shirom (1999), organizational climate refers to 'members' perceptions of organizational features such as decision-making, leadership and norms about work'.

### Organizational processes

A number of social processes take place in organizations that affect how they function. These are: interaction and networking, communication, group behaviour, leadership, power, politics and conflict.

### Personal characteristics

The personal characteristics that affect people's behaviour at work are their ability, intelligence, personality, attitudes, emotions and emotional intelligence.

### Emotional intelligence

Emotional intelligence is a combination of skills and abilities such as self-awareness, self-control, empathy and sensitivity to the feelings of others. Someone with high levels of emotional intelligence should be able to relate to people effectively.

## Questions

- 1 What is organizational behaviour?
- 2 On what is organizational behaviour theory based?
- 3 What is an organization?
- 4 What is organization structure?
- 5 What is generally agreed to be the most realistic theory of organization?
- 6 What is organizational culture?
- 7 How does organizational culture develop?
- 8 What are the components of culture?
- 9 How can cultures be classified?
- 10 What is organizational climate?
- 11 What are the key organizational processes?
- 12 What is the 'big five' model?
- 13 What is emotional intelligence?
- 14 What are the implications of organization theory for HR specialists?

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## 11

# Work, organization and job design

## KEY CONCEPTS AND TERMS

Autonomous working groups	Organizational choice
Equifinality	Organizational dilemma
Facility layout	Organization planning
Flexible firm	Organizations as systems
Fordism	Organizing
Hot-desking	Self-managed teams
Intrinsic motivation	Socio-technical systems theory
Lattice organization	Smart working
Law of the situation	Strategic choice
Line and staff organization	System
Matrix organization	Taylorism
Mechanistic organization	Work
Minimum critical specification	Work environment
Multiskilling	Work system
Organic organization	Work system design

## LEARNING OUTCOMES

On completing this chapter you should be able to define these key concepts. You should also understand:

- Work design methodology
- Changes in the nature of work
- Work system design
- Process planning
- Smart working
- Flexible working
- High-performance working
- Lean manufacturing
- Organization design
- Job design

## Introduction

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Work, organization, and job design are three distinct but closely associated processes that establish what work is done in organizations and how it is done. Work design deals with the ways in which things are done in the work system of a business by teams and individuals. Organization design is concerned with deciding how organizations should be structured. Job design is about establishing what people in individual jobs or roles are there to do. Although these three activities are dealt with separately in this chapter they share one purpose – to ensure that the organization's work systems and structure operate effectively, make the best use of people in their jobs and roles and take account of the needs of people at work.

In theory, to achieve that purpose, work, organization and job design function sequentially. The work system is designed to meet the specific needs of the business and to deliver value to its customers or clients. An organization structure or system (not all organizations are rigidly structured) has to be developed to enable the work system to operate. The structure is made up of jobs or roles (there is a distinction, which will be explained later) that have to be designed in ways that will maximize the extent to which they can be carried out effectively and provide intrinsic motivation, ie motivation from the work itself.

In practice, the processes involved can run concurrently – the work system will involve deciding how the work should be organized, and both the work system and organization design processes will define what sort of jobs or roles are required. At the same time, job design considerations will affect how the work is organized and how the work system functions. This chapter deals with each aspect of design separately, but it should be remembered that the processes interlink and overlap.

## Work design

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Work design is the creation of systems of work and a working environment that enhance organizational effectiveness and productivity, ensure that the organization becomes 'a great place in which to work' and are conducive to the health, safety and well-being of

employees. Work involves the exertion of effort and the application of knowledge and skills to achieve a purpose. Systems of work are the combined processes, methods and techniques used to get work done. The work environment comprises the design of jobs, working conditions and the ways in which people are treated at work by their managers and co-workers as well as the work system. Work design is closely associated with organization and job design in that the latter is conducted within the context of the system of work and the work environment.

To understand the meaning of work design it is necessary first to appreciate what is happening to the world of work and next to review its history.

### **What is happening to work**

The key changes in the contextual and external environment surrounding the world of work have been set out clearly by Parker *et al* (2001). They are:

- a shift away from large-scale industrial production, with a dramatic decline in manufacturing jobs and rise in service work;
- partly as a consequence of this, an increase in customer-facing roles involving some form of emotional behaviour – the requirement for employees to express positive emotions in the way in which they interact with customers;
- significant shifts in the demographics of the workforce in the shape of an increased proportion of women, greater ethnic diversity, more educated employees and an ageing workforce;
- growth in the number of employees engaged in 'knowledge work' – for example, professional services and new product and service development;
- the requirement for a greater variety of products and services and flexibility and agility in responding to customer needs and increased global competition;
- developments in technology affecting the degree to which jobs are involved in IT and become dependent on it;
- shifts from traditional, office or factory-based working to more flexible alternatives, including homeworking;

- a significant increase in the number of employers that an individual employee expects to work for during his or her career.

### Work design – a short history

Work design began with the concept of the division of labour originated by Adam Smith (1776). Much later came ‘Taylorism’, the scientific management movement pioneered by Taylor (1911), which was based on the belief that the most efficient way to do tasks was to remove the responsibility for how to do the work from the individual employee to engineers or managers. The next step was ‘Fordism’, the moving assembly line introduced by Henry Ford in 1914. Thereafter, the practice of work simplification became embedded in organizations and to a large extent still exists.

The first move away from this situation was provided by the concept of job enrichment popularized by Herzberg (1968: 83), who referred to it as ‘vertical job loading’. His definition of the principles and motivators involved is set out in Table 11.1. This was reinforced by job design theory (Hackman and Oldham, 1974).

More recently, the notion of ‘smart working’ has emerged. Essentially, this means managing the work environment in order to release employees’ energy and drive business performance. Smart working, as described in detail later, has been the subject of extensive research conducted by the CIPD (2008).

However, before examining the notion of smart working it is necessary to remember that it takes place within the system of work, and approaches to work system design are therefore examined first.

**TABLE 11.1** Vertical job loading (job enrichment) principles and motivators involved

Principles	Motivators involved
Removing some controls while retaining accountability	Responsibility and personal achievement
Increasing the accountability of individuals for own work	Responsibility and personal achievement
Giving a person a complete natural unit of work (module, division, area, and so on)	Responsibility and recognition
Granting additional authority to employees in their activity; job freedom	Responsibility, achievement and recognition
Making periodic reports directly available to the workers themselves rather than to supervisors	Internal recognition
Introducing new and more difficult tasks not previously handled	Growth and learning
Assigning individuals specific or specialized tasks, enabling them to become experts	Responsibility, growth and advancement

**SOURCE:** Herzberg (1968: 83)

## Work system design

A system is a set of practices or activities that fit together and interact to achieve a purpose. Work system design is concerned with how the various processes required to make a product or provide a service should operate. It deals with the set of related activities that combine to give a result that customers want. The structure of the system describes the relations between different operations.

A work system may be centred on activities such as manufacturing, chemical processing, information processing, supply, distribution, transport, the provision of public services or customer service. There is usually a choice between different processes within the work system. As the design of the work system affects costs, quality and productivity it is important to provide the best match between the product or service and the process used to make or deliver it.

## Process-centred organizations

Process-centred organizations avoid focusing too closely on the design of a rigid work system but instead concentrate on the stream of products or services required and the processes required to ensure that work flows smoothly to the ultimate satisfaction of the customer or client. They have the following features:

- The focus is on horizontal processes that cut across organizational boundaries.
- The overriding objective will be to maintain a smooth flow of work between functions and to achieve synergy by pooling resources from different functions in task forces or project teams.
- The organization will not be based on the old hierarchical ‘command and control’ structure, ie one that consists of a functional structure with a number of different disciplines. Instead it will be a ‘lattice’, or ‘matrix’ organization (a lattice organization is one with a non-hierarchical, flat structure where the emphasis is on horizontal processes, the elimination of boundaries between functions and teamwork; a matrix organization is one that consists of a functional structure with a number of different disciplines and a project structure

consisting of project teams drawn from the disciplines);

- There may still be designated functions for, say, manufacturing, sales and distribution, but the emphasis will be on how these areas work together on multifunctional projects to deal with demands such as product/market development.
- Belief in and reliance on teamwork.
- Expansion of traditional jobs and increased emphasis on flexible roles, with employees making decisions and dealing with all types of customer issues.
- Access to all types of information and knowledge throughout the organization.
- Quality and continuous improvement will be regarded as a common responsibility shared between managers and staff from each function.

## Process planning

Work system design covers the planning of processes such as flexible manufacturing systems (computer numerical control machines controlled by a central computer that allows fast and easy changes between products), and supply chain management (the control of products from the original suppliers of materials through to the final customers). It may involve facility layout – the physical arrangement of equipment, offices, rooms, work stations (including ‘hot-desks’ – individual desks shared between several people) and other resources.

Process planning may determine how manufacturing or the provision of a service should be divided into a series of stages such as machines in a production line, each of which uses resources and adds value.

## Requirements to be met in work system design

When designing a work system it is necessary to see that it will:

- fit work requirements for efficiency and flexibility;
- ensure the smooth flow of processes or activities, or of materials from supplier to customer;

- facilitate the effective use of resources and the control of waste;
- as far as possible enable employees to gain fulfilment from their work by providing scope for variety, challenge and autonomy;
- encourage cooperative effort through teamworking;
- provide a good work environment in terms of working conditions;
- take account of the need to provide a healthy and safe system of work ('build safety into the system') bearing in mind the need to minimize stress and pay attention to ergonomic considerations in the design of equipment and work stations to eliminate or at least significantly reduce the risk of such conditions as repetitive strain injury;
- take account of environmental considerations;
- operate generally in accordance with the principles of 'smart working' as described below.

## Smart working

As defined by the CIPD (2008: 4), smart working is: 'An approach to organizing work that aims to drive greater efficiency and effectiveness in achieving job outcomes through a combination of flexibility, autonomy and collaboration, in parallel with optimizing tools and working environments for employees.' The characteristics of smart working as established by the CIPD research were:

- self-management – a high degree of autonomy and a philosophy of empowerment;
- the use of virtual teams or work groups;
- focus on outcome-based indicators of performance;
- high-performance working;
- flexibility in work locations and hours;
- use of more advanced communications technology;
- hot-desking and working from home;
- ways of working that are underpinned by or drive high-trust working relationships;
- alignment of smart working with business objectives.

Typical smart working arrangements identified by the CIPD research include flexible working, high-performance working, 'lean' production and designing jobs in which there is a higher degree of freedom to act. The role of each of those arrangements in work design is described below.

## Flexible working

Flexible working is a pattern of working practice or working hours that deviates from the standard or normal arrangement. The aim is to provide for greater operational flexibility, improve the use of employees' skills and capacities, increase productivity and reduce employment costs. Flexible working has become increasingly important as a means of enhancing operational effectiveness.

Flexible working means reconsidering traditional employment patterns. This could include operational flexibility, multitasking, the use of subcontracting and outsourcing, or introducing working arrangements such as flexible hours, job sharing and homeworking.

## Forms of operational flexibility

Operational flexibility refers to flexibility in the ways in which work is carried out. The term is sometimes extended to include financial flexibility. The three forms of operational flexibility are:

- *Functional flexibility* so that employees can be redeployed quickly and smoothly between activities and tasks. It may require multitasking – workers who possess and can apply a number of skills, for example, both mechanical and electrical engineering, or multitasking – workers who carry out a number of different tasks in a work team.
- *Structural flexibility* in a 'flexible firm' where the core of permanent employees is supplemented by a peripheral group of part-time employees, employees on short- or fixed-term contracts or subcontracted workers, as described by Doeringer and Priore (1971) and Atkinson (1984).
- *Numerical flexibility*, which is associated with structural flexibility and means that the

number of employees can be quickly and easily increased or decreased in line with even short-term changes in the level of demand for labour.

Financial flexibility provides for pay levels to reflect the state of supply and demand in the external labour market and also means the use of flexible pay systems that facilitate either functional or numerical flexibility.

## Multiskilling

Multiskilling takes place when workers acquire through experience and training a range of different skills they can apply when carrying out different tasks (multitasking). This means that they can be used flexibly, transferring from one task to another as the occasion demands.

A multiskilling strategy will mean providing people with a variety of experience through, for example, moving them between different jobs or tasks (job rotation) and secondments, and by making arrangements for them to acquire new skills through training. It typically includes setting up flexible work teams, the members of which can be deployed on all or many of the team's tasks. A flexible employee resourcing policy can then be established that enables the organization to redeploy people rapidly to meet new demands. This implies abandoning the traditional job description that prescribes the tasks to be carried and replacing it with a role profile, which specifies the range of knowledge and skills that the role holder needs.

## Job-sharing

This is an arrangement in which two employees share the work of one full-time position, dividing pay and benefits between them according to the time that each of them works. Job-sharing can mean splitting days or weeks or, less frequently, working alternate weeks. The advantages of job-sharing include reduced employee turnover and absenteeism, because it suits the needs of individuals. Greater continuity results: because if one half of the job-sharing team is ill or leaves, the sharer will continue working for at least half the time. Job-sharing also means that a wider employment pool can be tapped for those who cannot work full-time but want permanent employment. The disadvantages are the administrative costs involved and the risk of responsibility being divided.

## Hot-desking

Hot-desking means that individual desks are shared between several people who use them at different times. Those involved do not therefore have a permanent work station. This is convenient for the organization but not everyone likes it.

## Homeworking

Home-based employees can carry out such roles as consultants, analysts, designers or programmers, or they can undertake administrative work. The advantages are flexibility to respond rapidly to fluctuations in demand, reduced overheads and lower employment costs if the homeworkers are self-employed (care, however, has to be taken to ensure that they are regarded as self-employed for Income Tax and National Insurance purposes).

## Flexible hour arrangements

Flexible hour arrangements can be included in a flexibility plan in one or more of the following ways:

- flexible daily hours – these may follow an agreed pattern day by day according to typical or expected workloads (eg flexitime systems);
- flexible weekly hours – providing for longer weekly hours to be worked at certain peak periods during the year;
- flexible daily and weekly hours – varying daily or weekly hours or a combination of both to match the input of hours to the required output. Such working times, unlike daily or weekly arrangements, may fluctuate between a minimum and a maximum;
- compressed working weeks in which employees work fewer than the five standard days;
- annual hours – scheduling employee hours on the basis of the number of hours to be worked, with provisions for the increase or reduction of hours in any given period, according to the demand for goods or services.

In addition there is the pernicious arrangement of zero-hours contracts in which an employer does not guarantee the employee a fixed number of hours per week. Rather, the employee is expected to be on-call and receive pay only for hours worked. Such contracts are most common in retail, hospitality and restaurants.

## High-performance working

High-performance working was defined by Combs *et al* (2006) as the sum of the processes, practices and policies put in place by employers to enable employees to perform to their full potential. They referred to employee participation and flexible working arrangements as examples of such systems that have a direct impact on ways of working and therefore flow through to job design.

Sung and Ashton (2005) defined high-performance work practices as a set or 'bundle' of 35 complementary work practices covering three broad areas:

- High employee involvement work practices – eg self-directed teams, quality circles and sharing/access to company information.
- Human resource practices – eg sophisticated recruitment processes, performance appraisals, mentoring and work redesign.
- Reward and commitment practices – eg various financial rewards, family-friendly policies, job rotation and flexible hours.

## Lean manufacturing

Lean manufacturing or lean production, often known simply as 'Lean', is a process improvement methodology developed by Toyota in Japan. Lean focuses on reducing waste and ensuring the flow of production in order to deliver value to customers. It concentrates initially on the design of the process so that waste can be minimized during manufacture. It then examines operations in order to identify opportunities to improve the flow of production, remove wasteful practices and engage in continuous improvement. Various tools are available such as 'FiveS', which is a workplace methodology that uses a list of five words starting with the letter 'S' (sorting, straightening, systematic cleaning, standardizing and sustaining). Reference to these enables a dialogue to take place with employees on how work should be done.

But as noted by the CIPD (2008: 11), the success of Lean depends not so much on the tools but on its approach to work. Lean is implemented by communities of people who carry out and supervise the work and may include stakeholders such as customers. Lean team members are encouraged to think flexibly and be adaptable to change. They have a sense of ownership of what they do and achieve.

## CASE STUDIES

### Work organization: W L Gore

As described by the CIPD (2008: 25–26), W L Gore, which is best known for its GORE-TEX® fabrics, has a non-hierarchical, flat organization structure (a 'lattice' structure). There are no traditional organization charts, no ranks or job titles and no chains of command nor predetermined channels of communication. What is important when recruiting new people is that they have the right fit with Gore's culture. There are no rigid job specifications. Instead, associates make a commitment to contribute individually and collectively to work areas or projects according to their skills. Individuals are encouraged to take an interest in a wide

variety of job areas or projects. Provided the core responsibilities within their role are carried out, associates can then stretch and build on their role to suit their interests, aspirations and the business needs. Gore's 'lattice' structure gives associates the opportunity to use their own judgement, take ownership of work areas and access the resources they need for projects to be successful. Gore's core values and ways of working are built on the principles of 'smart working'. Its unique culture, which fosters creativity, self-motivation, participation and equality, has proved to be a key contributor to associate satisfaction and retention.



## Flexible working: B&Q

Flexible working arrangements have been extended at B&Q in association with its diversity strategy. The main components of its flexible working policy are:

- term-time contracts available to parents and grandparents with children/grandchildren up to the age of 16 years (18 if the child is disabled);
- job-share for employees who do not want – or are unable – to work full-time; online job-share register available to help individuals find a job-share partner;
- staggered start/finish times, allowing for personal commitments/interests;
- part-time hours;
- split shifts to fit in with employees' personal commitments;
- dual store contracts, allowing employees to work at more than one location;
- one employee/two roles, allowing employees to develop new and different skills, benefit from multiskilling and work in more than one area of the business;
- home/remote working, allowing employees to work from home or away from their normal workplace on an occasional basis;
- career breaks of 3 to 12 months can be taken for any reason;
- child care vouchers available across the organization;
- maternity, paternity and adoption policies enhanced above the statutory minimum;
- shared maternity/paternity leave; unpaid additional leave can be taken by father/partner where both parents work for B&Q and mother returns to work;
- IVF leave: one week paid time off for IVF treatment;
- paid compassionate or carer's leave: one week off per year.

## Organization design

Organization design is the process of deciding how organizations should be structured in terms of the ways in which the responsibility for carrying out the overall task is allocated to individuals and groups of people and how the relationships between them function. The aim is to ensure that people work effectively together to achieve the overall purpose of the organization. The basic question of 'Who does what?' is answered by line managers but HR specialists are also involved in their capacity of helping the business to make the best use of its people. HR professionals can contribute to organization design or redesign activities by using their understanding of the factors affecting organizational behaviour and their knowledge of the business as a whole.

It is generally assumed that organization design is a logical and systematic affair, based on accepted

principles and using analytical techniques that produce an inevitable 'best' result. But as explained below there is always organizational choice. There are certain guidelines to which consideration needs to be given, and organization reviews should be based on analysis, as also discussed below. But, ultimately, the ways in which an organization functions and therefore its structure (or sometimes its lack of structure) are contingent on the situation. In accordance with socio-technical theory (see Chapter 10) this consists of the people who work in the organization and the systems and techniques it uses to achieve its purpose.

### **Organizational choice**

There is never one best way of organizing anything. There is always a choice. It is necessary to bear in mind that structural requirements in organizations



or organizational units will vary widely according to what they are there to do and the activities they have to carry out. That is why there are no absolute principles such as the traditional precepts of ‘unity of command’ (one person, one boss) or the need to limit spans of control (the number of functions or people for which a manager is responsible). It all depends. Burns and Stalker (1961) established in their study of electronic companies in Scotland that in stable conditions a highly structured or ‘mechanistic’ organization will emerge that has specialized functions, clearly defined jobs, strict administrative routines and a hierarchical system of exercising control. However, when the environment is volatile, a rigid system of ranks and routine will inhibit the organization’s speed and sensitivity of response. In these circumstances the structure is, or should be, ‘organic’ in the sense that it is a function of the situation in which the enterprise finds itself rather than conforming to any predetermined and rigid view of how it should operate.

As explained by Cummings and Worley (2005: 516), this means that there are two different types of organization design – mechanistic and organic – the characteristics of which are shown in Table 11.2.

## Organization reviews

In exercising organizational choice an organizational review, as described below, will help in the evaluation of the alternatives, but the law of the situation,

as described originally by Mary Parker Follett (1924), should prevail. This states that the work that people are required to do depends on the objective requirements of the situation. The final choice will depend upon the context and circumstances of the organization – as Lupton (1975) pointed out, it is important to achieve best fit.

Organizations may evolve organically without any conscious attempt to design them. But if a deliberate design programme is planned this should be based on the evidence that can be produced by a formal organization review conducted in the following stages:

- 1 *Activity analysis* to establish what work is done and what needs to be done. Two questions need to be answered: 1) are all the activities required properly catered for?; 2) are any unnecessary activities being carried out?
- 2 *Structural analysis* to determine how activities are grouped together; the number of levels in the hierarchy; the extent to which authority is decentralized to divisions and strategic business units (SBUs); where functions such as finance, HR, IT and research and development are placed in the structure (eg as central functions or integrated into divisions or SBUs); the relationships that exist between different units and functions (with particular attention being given to the way in which they communicate and cooperate with one another). Attention would be paid to such issues as the logic of

**TABLE 11.2** Mechanistic and organic design

	Mechanistic design	Organic design
Structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Formal</li> <li>• Hierarchical (command and control)</li> <li>• Distinct functional units</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Informal</li> <li>• Flat, lean and flexible-horizontal processes</li> <li>• Lattice structure</li> </ul>
Work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tightly defined jobs</li> <li>• Minimal scope in jobs for decision-making</li> <li>• Closely controlled work groups</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Flexible roles</li> <li>• Enriched roles with more autonomy</li> <li>• Self-managed teams</li> </ul>

the way in which activities are grouped and decentralized; the span of control of managers (the number of separate functions or people they are directly responsible for); any overlap between functions or gaps leading to the neglect of certain activities; the existence of unnecessary departments, units, functions or layers of management; the clarity with which individual responsibilities and accountabilities are defined.

- 3 *Diagnosis* to identify (on the basis of the activities and structural analyses) the reasons for any structural problems facing the organization or function.
- 4 The *choice* in the light of the analyses and diagnosis of how the business or part of it should be designed or revised.
- 5 A *plan* to implement any revisions to the structure, possibly in phases.

Checklists covering the points that should be considered in analysing activities and structures are set out in the organization design toolkit (Chapter 62). When conducting the review the following factors should be taken into account.

## Changes in the nature of organizations

As noted by Parker *et al* (2001: 418): ‘Organizations... differ from the rather static and inflexible enterprises of earlier times. Greater flexibility is required to enable the rapid delivery of low-cost, high-quality and customized products, and to provide increasingly powerful and demanding customers with seamless service.’ They also noted that the use of teamworking and other flexible forms of working continues to grow, distinctions between departments are disappearing as organizations become more integrated, and IT has changed the way in which work is conducted. These considerations may indicate that a traditional hierarchical and rigid structure is inappropriate and a more flexible approach is required.

## Minimum critical specification

In accordance with systems theory (see Chapter 10) and the principle of equifinality (the premise that multiple organizational forms are equally effective), Huczynski and Buchanan (2007: 89) suggested that:

‘It is not necessary to specify in detail the organization structure and the duties of each member. If an organization can develop its own method of operating and change that as circumstances require, then it will be necessary only to detail the basic and most significant aspects. This approach to organization design is called minimum critical specification.’

## Strategic choice

As noted above, there is always choice about what form an organization structure should take. Child (1972) explained that in making such choices the leadership group (the dominant coalition) had to be persuaded to influence the organization structure through an essentially political process. He called this process ‘strategic choice’. Choice analysis regards debate and negotiation in the social networks existing in organizations as integral to decision-making on organizational structures.

## Successful organization design

Organizations are not static things. Changes are constantly taking place in the business itself, in the environment in which the business operates, and in the people who work in the business. There is no such thing as an ‘ideal’ organization. The most that can be done is to optimize the processes involved, remembering that whatever structure evolves it will be contingent on the circumstances of the organization. An important point to bear in mind is that organizations consist of people working more or less cooperatively together. Inevitably, and especially at managerial levels, the organization may have to be adjusted to fit the particular strengths and attributes of the people available. The result may not conform to the ideal, but it is more likely to work than a structure that ignores the human element. It is always desirable to have an ideal structure in mind, but it is equally desirable to modify it to meet particular circumstances, as long as there is awareness of any potential problems that may arise. This may seem an obvious point, but it is frequently ignored by management consultants and others who adopt a doctrinaire approach to organization, often with disastrous results.

The worst sin that organization designers can commit is that of imposing their own ideology on the organization. Their job is to be eclectic in their

knowledge, sensitive in their analysis of the situation and deliberate in their approach to the evaluation of alternatives.

Research conducted by Whittington and Molloy (2005) indicated that to achieve success in organization design it is necessary to:

- obtain top management support, especially personal commitment and political support;
- avoid piecemeal, uncoordinated change initiatives by making a strategic business case that anticipates implications across the entire organization;
- achieve substantive, rather than tokenistic, employee involvement in the change process, moving beyond communication to active engagement;
- invest in communications with external stakeholders, including customers, suppliers and financial stakeholders;
- involve HR professionals closely, right from the start – involving HR has been proved to positively impact on a range of performance outcomes;
- maintain effective project management disciplines;
- build skilled change management teams – with the right mix of experience and abilities – that can work together.

## Job design

Job design specifies the contents of jobs in order to satisfy work requirements and meet the personal needs of the job holder, thus increasing levels of employee engagement. As observed by Wall and Clegg (1998: 265):

Jobs are created by people for people. Whether deliberately or by default, choices are made about which tasks to group together to form a job, the extent to which job holders should follow prescribed procedures in completing those tasks, how closely the job incumbent will be supervised, and numerous other aspects of the work. Such choices are the essence of job design.

## Jobs and roles

A distinction can be made between jobs and roles. A job is an organizational unit consisting of a group of defined tasks or activities to be carried out or duties to be performed. A role is the part played by individuals and the patterns of behaviour expected of them in fulfilling their work requirements. Jobs are about tasks, roles are about people. This distinction means that while jobs may be designed to fit work requirements, roles are developed as people work flexibly, demonstrate that they can do more and take on different responsibilities. Role development (as covered in the next section of this chapter) happens informally, in contrast to the more formal approaches to job design (considered below).

## Factors affecting job design

Deciding on the content of a job starts from work requirements because that is why the job exists. When the tasks to be done have been determined it is then necessary to consider how the jobs can be set up to provide the maximum degree of intrinsic motivation for those who have to carry them out with a view to improving performance and productivity. Consideration also has to be given to another important aim of job design: to fulfil the social responsibilities of the organization to the people who work in it by improving the quality of working life, an aim that, as stated in Wilson's (1973) report on this subject, depends upon both efficiency of performance and satisfaction of the worker.

Clearly, the content of a job depends on the work system in which it exists and the organization structure in which it is placed. Job design therefore happens within the context of work and organization design, as described in this chapter, but it is also affected by the following factors:

- the characteristics of jobs;
- the characteristics of task structure;
- the process of intrinsic motivation;
- the job characteristics model;
- the implications of group activities.

## The characteristics of jobs

There are three fundamental characteristics shared by all jobs:

- 1 Job range – the number of operations a job holder performs to complete a task.
- 2 Job depth – the amount of discretion a job holder has to decide job activities and job outcomes.
- 3 Job relationships – the interpersonal relationships between job holders and their managers and co-workers.

## Task structure

Job design requires the assembly of a number of tasks into a job or a group of jobs. An individual may carry out one main task that consists of a number of inter-related elements or functions. Or task functions may be allocated to a team working closely together in a manufacturing 'cell' or customer service unit, or strung along an assembly line. In more complex jobs, individuals may carry out a variety of connected tasks (multitasking), each with a number of functions, or these tasks may be allocated to a team of workers or be divided between them. In the latter case, the tasks may require a variety of skills that have to be possessed by all members of the team (multiskilling) in order to work flexibly. Complexity in a job may be a reflection of the number and variety of tasks to be carried out, the different skills or competencies to be used, the range and scope of the decisions that have to be made, or the difficulty of predicting the outcome of decisions.

The internal structure of each task consists of three elements: planning (deciding on the course of action, its timing and the resources required), executing (carrying out the plan) and controlling (monitoring performance and progress and taking corrective action when required). A completely integrated job includes all these elements for each of the tasks involved. The worker, or group of workers, having been given objectives in terms of output, quality and cost targets, decides on how the work is to be done, assembles the resources, performs the work, and monitors output, quality and cost standards. Responsibility in a job is measured by the amount of authority that someone has to do all of these things.

The ideal arrangement from the point of view of engagement and motivation is to provide for fully integrated jobs containing all three task elements. In practice, management and team leaders are often entirely responsible for planning and control, leaving the worker responsible for execution. To a degree,

this is inevitable, but one of the aims of job design is often to extend the responsibility of workers into the functions of planning and control. This can involve empowerment – giving individuals and teams more responsibility for decision-making and ensuring that they have the training, support and guidance to exercise that responsibility properly.

## Intrinsic motivation

The case for using job design techniques is based on the premise that effective performance and genuine satisfaction in work follow mainly from the intrinsic content of the job. This is related to the fundamental concept that people are motivated when they are provided with the means to achieve their goals. Work provides the means to earn money, which as an extrinsic reward satisfies basic needs and is instrumental in providing ways of satisfying higher-level needs. But work also provides intrinsic rewards related to achievement, responsibility and the opportunity to use and develop skills that are more under the control of the worker.

## The job characteristics model

The most influential model for job design is the job characteristics model developed by Hackman and Oldham (1974). They identified five core job characteristics:

- 1 *Skill variety*: the degree to which a job requires an employee to perform activities that challenge his or her skills and abilities.
- 2 *Task identity*: the degree to which the job requires completion of an identifiable piece of work.
- 3 *Task significance*: the degree to which the job outcome has a substantial impact on others.
- 4 *Autonomy*: the degree to which the job gives an employee freedom and discretion in scheduling work and determining how it is performed.
- 5 *Feedback*: the degree to which an employee gets information about the effectiveness of his or her efforts – with particular emphasis on feedback directly related to the work itself rather than from a third party (for example, a manager).

Hackman and Oldham explained that if the design of a job satisfied the core job characteristics the employee would perceive that the work was worthwhile, would feel responsible for the work and would know if the work had been completed satisfactorily. The outcome of this would be high-quality work performance and high job satisfaction as a result of intrinsic motivation.

## The implications of group activities

Jobs should never be considered in isolation. All job holders belong to formal or informal groups and the interrelationships that exist in such groups should be considered when looking at the content of an individual job.

## Approaches to job design

Job design starts with an analysis of task requirements, using the job analysis techniques described in Chapter 51. These requirements will be a function of the system of work and the organization structure. As described by Robertson and Smith (1985), the method can be based on the job characteristics model as follows:

- Influence skill variety by providing opportunities for people to do several tasks and by combining tasks.
- Influence task identity by combining tasks to form natural work units.
- Influence task significance by forming natural work units and informing people of the importance of their work.
- Influence autonomy by giving people responsibility for determining their own working systems.
- Influence feedback by establishing good relationships and opening feedback channels.

These methods influence the four approaches to job design described below.

## Job rotation

This is the movement of employees from one task to another to reduce monotony by increasing variety.

## Job enlargement

This means combining previously fragmented tasks into one job, again to increase the variety and meaning of repetitive work.

## Job enrichment

This goes beyond job enlargement to add greater autonomy and responsibility to a job. Job enrichment aims to maximize the interest and challenge of work by providing the employee with a job that has these characteristics:

- it is a complete piece of work in the sense that the worker can identify a series of tasks or activities that end in a recognizable and definable product;
- it affords the employee as much variety, decision-making responsibility and control as possible in carrying out the work;
- it provides direct feedback through the work itself on how well the employee is doing his or her job.

As described by Herzberg (1968), job enrichment is not just increasing the number or variety of tasks, nor is it the provision of opportunities for job rotation. These approaches may relieve boredom, but they do not result in positive increases in motivation.

## Self-managing teams (autonomous work groups)

These are self-regulating teams who work largely without direct supervision. The philosophy on which this approach is founded is that of job enrichment but it is also influenced by socio-technical systems theory, which suggests that because the technical aspects of work are interrelated with the social aspects both should be considered when designing jobs.

A self-managing team enlarges individual jobs to include a wider range of operative skills (multi-skilling); decides on methods of work and the planning, scheduling and control of work; distributes tasks itself among its members; and monitors its own performance, taking corrective action when required.

The advocates of self-managing teams or autonomous work groups claim that they represent a more comprehensive view of organizations than the rather

simplistic individual motivation theories that underpin job rotation, enlargement and enrichment. Be that as it may, the strength of this system is that in line with socio-technical theory it takes account of the social or group factors and the technology, as well as the individual motivators.

In a study of customer service representatives in a telecommunications company, Batt (1999) found that work organized into self-managed teams led to better service and sales performance (an increase of 9.2 per cent per employee) than traditional work designs, and that the interactive effect of self-managed teams and new technology raised sales by an additional 17.4 per cent.

### **Choice of approach**

Of the four approaches described above, it is generally recognized that, although job rotation and job enlargement have their uses in developing skills and relieving monotony, they do not go to the root of the requirements for intrinsic motivation and for meeting the various motivating characteristics of jobs. These are best satisfied by using, as appropriate, job enrichment, autonomous work groups, or high-performance work design.

### **High-performance work design**

This concentrates on setting up working groups in environments where high levels of performance can be achieved. As described by Buchanan (1987), this requires management to define what it needs in the form of methods of production and the results expected from its introduction. It involves multiskilling – job demarcation lines are eliminated as far as possible and encouragement and training are provided for employees to acquire new skills.

Self-managed teams are set up with full responsibility for planning, controlling and monitoring the work.

## **Role development**

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Role development is the continuous process through which roles are defined or modified as work proceeds and evolves. Job design as described above takes place when a new job is created or an existing job is changed, often following a reorganization or the introduction of a new work system. But the part that people play in carrying out their roles can evolve over time as people grow into their roles and grow with them, and as incremental changes take place in the scope of the work and the degree to which individuals have freedom to act (their autonomy). Roles will be developed as people develop in them – responding to opportunities and changing demands, acquiring new skills and developing competencies.

Role development takes place in the context of day-to-day work and is therefore a matter between managers and the members of their teams. It means agreeing definitions of accountabilities, objectives and competency requirements as the roles evolve. When these change – as they probably will in all except the most routine jobs – it is desirable to achieve mutual understanding of new expectations.

The process of understanding how roles are developing, and agreeing the implications, can take place through performance management in which the regularly updated performance agreement spells out agreed outcomes (key result areas) and competency requirements. It is necessary to ensure that managers and team leaders define roles within the performance management framework, taking into account the principles of job design set out above.



## Key learning points: Work, organization and job design

### Work, organization and job design

These are three distinct but closely associated processes that establish what work is done in organizations and how it is done.

### Work design

Work design is the creation of systems of work and a working environment that enhance organizational effectiveness and productivity, ensure that the organization becomes 'a great place in which to work' and are conducive to the health, safety and well-being of employees.

### Work system design

Work system design is concerned with how the processes required to make a product or provide a service should operate. It deals with the set of related activities that combine to give a result that customers want. The structure of the system describes the relations between different operations.

### Smart working

The CIPD (2008: 4) defined smart working as: 'An approach to organizing work that aims to drive greater efficiency and effectiveness in achieving job outcomes through a combination of flexibility, autonomy and collaboration, in parallel with optimizing tools and working environments for employees.'

### Flexible working

Flexible working is a pattern of working practice or working hours that deviates from the standard or normal arrangement.

### High-performance working

High-performance working was defined by Combs *et al* (2006) as the sum of the processes, practices and policies put in place by employers to enable employees to perform to their full potential.

### Lean manufacturing

A process improvement methodology developed by Toyota. 'Lean' focuses on minimizing waste and ensuring the flow of production in order to deliver value to customers.

### Aims of organization design

The overall aim of organization design is to optimize the arrangements for conducting the affairs of the business or function and thus achieve the 'best fit' between the structure and what the business or function is there to do.

### Organization analysis

The starting point for an organization review is an analysis of the existing circumstances, structure and processes of the organization and an assessment of the strategic issues that might affect it in the future.

### Organization diagnosis

The aim of the diagnosis is to establish, on the basis of the analysis, the reasons for any structural problems facing the organization or function.

### Organizational choice

There is never one best way of organizing anything. There is always a choice.

### Job design

Job design specifies the contents of jobs in order to satisfy work requirements and meet the personal needs of the job holder, thus increasing levels of employee engagement.

### Jobs and roles

A job is an organizational unit consisting of a group of defined tasks or activities to be carried out or duties to be performed. A role is the part played by individuals and the patterns of behaviour expected of them in fulfilling their work requirements. Jobs are about tasks, roles are about people.

### The job characteristics model

The job characteristics model was developed by Hackman and Oldham (1974). They identified five core job characteristics: skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy and feedback.

### Approaches to job design

Job design starts with an analysis of task requirements, using job analysis techniques.

### Role development

Role development is the continuous process through which roles are defined or modified as work proceeds and evolves.

## Questions

- 1 What is work design?
- 2 What is work system design?
- 3 What is smart working?
- 4 What are the main forms of operational flexibility?
- 5 What is a flexible firm?
- 6 What are the overall aims of organization design?
- 7 What are the stages of an organization review?
- 8 What is job design?
- 9 What is the difference between a job and a role?
- 10 What is the job characteristics model?
- 11 What is job enrichment?
- 12 What is role development?

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# 12

## Organization development

### KEY CONCEPTS AND TERMS

Action research	Neurolinguistic programming
Behaviour modelling	Organization capability
Behavioural science	Organization development
Business model innovation	Organizational/corporate culture
Change management	Organizational transformation
Diagnostics	Process
Forced-field analysis	Process consultation
Group dynamics	Survey feedback
Humanism	T-groups
Integrated strategic change	Transactional analysis
Intervention	

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

On completing this chapter you should be able to define these key concepts. You should also understand:

- The meaning of organization development
- The contents of traditional organization development (OD) programmes
- The criticisms made of the original OD concept
- How OD has moved on since it was first introduced
- The nature of organization development today, including the processes of diagnosis and programming

## Introduction

Work, organization and job design provide the basic ingredients for operating a business. But it is necessary to see that these processes work well, which is the aim of organization development. In this chapter, organization development is defined and its somewhat chequered history is described, from its origins as 'OD' to the more focused and businesslike approaches adopted today. This leads to a discussion of organization development strategy and an examination of organization development in practice, involving the use of diagnostics as the basis for preparing organization development programmes.

## Organization development defined

Organization development is a systematic approach to improving organizational capability, which is concerned with process – how things get done. As expressed by Beer (1980: 10), OD operates as: 'A system wide process of data collection, diagnosis, action planning, intervention and evaluation.'

Organization development in its traditional form as OD was later defined by Rowlandson (1984: 90) as 'an intervention strategy that uses group processes to focus on the whole culture of an organization in order to bring about planned change'. More recently, the CIPD (2010: 1) defined it broadly as a 'planned and systematic approach to enabling sustained organization performance through the involvement of its people'.

## The nature of organization development

Organization development in its original version as OD was based on behavioural science concepts, ie the field of enquiry dedicated to the study of human behaviour through sophisticated and rigorous methods. OD was practised through what were called 'interventions'.

However, during the 1980s and 1990s a number of other approaches were introduced. Further changes

occurred in the following decade during which a more strategic focus was adopted and more business-focused activities such as smart working and high-performance working came to the fore. It is these changes that led to the broader definition produced by the CIPD.

Organization development used to be the province of specialized consultants who tended to practise it as a mystery, with HR playing a supporting role if it played any role at all. But *HR Magazine* spelt out the close relationship between HR and organization development as follows.

### Source review

HR and organization development –  
*HR Magazine* (2007: 1)

To remain competitive in today's global marketplace, organizations must change. One of the most effective tools to promote successful change is organization development (OD). As HR increasingly focuses on building organizational learning, skills and workforce productivity, the effective use of OD to help achieve company business goals and strategies is becoming a broad HR competency as well as a key strategic HR tool. While there are variations regarding the definition of OD, the basic purpose of organization development is to increase an organization's effectiveness through planned interventions related to the organization's processes (often company-wide), resulting in improvements in productivity, return on investment and employee satisfaction.

The CIPD (2010: 3) stated that: 'We place considerable importance on OD, seeing it as one of the ten professional areas within the HR profession map which emphasizes its importance as a HR skill.' The CIPD also commented that:

OD is not a new discipline and has always had a focus on people but has only relatively recently become considered as a mainstream discipline of

HR. Supporters of OD argue that its strength is its ability to understand the whole organization and as such it may be inhibiting to root it too firmly in the HR function. However, given the increasing need for the HR profession to act as a business partner, OD and its methods have a part to play in developing HR's strategic role and its involvement in organizational change, organizational culture and employee engagement. (ibid: 3)

The strategic nature of organization development as an integral part of HRM arises because it can play a part in the implementation of business strategy. For example, a strategy for business model innovation (the process followed by an organization to develop a new business model or change an existing one) could result in the need for new organization structures and processes. This would include organization development and change management activities. The aim of this chapter is to explain the purpose of organization development in the light of an analysis of the history of the concept and how it can be applied as part of a strategic HRM approach.

## The story of organization development

There are three chapters in the story of organizational development: the original version of the 1960s and 70s, the extensions and modifications to the original approach in the 1980s and 90s, and the new look at organization development of the 2000s.

### **The first chapter – the original version**

Organization development emerged as the 'OD' movement in the 1960s. It was based on the strong humanistic values of its early founders, who wanted to improve the conditions of people's lives in organizations by applying behavioural science knowledge. Its origins can be traced to the writings of behavioural scientists such as Lewin (1947, 1951) on group dynamics (the improvement of group processes through various forms of training, eg team building, interactive skills training, T-groups) and change management. Other behavioural scientists included Maslow (1954) who produced his needs

theory of motivation, Herzberg *et al* (1957) who wrote about the motivation to work, and Argyris (1957) who emphasized the need to plan for integration and involvement. McGregor (1960) produced his 'Theory Y', which advocates the recognition of the needs of both the organization and the individual on the basis that, given the chance, people will not only accept but seek responsibility. Likert (1961) added his theory of supportive relationships.

The two founders of the organization development movement were Beckhard (1969) who probably coined the term, and Bennis (1969) who, according to Buchanan and Huczynski (2007: 575), described OD as a 'truth, trust, love and collaboration approach'. Ruona and Gibson (2004: 53) explained that:

Early OD interventions can be categorized as primarily focusing on individuals and interpersonal relations. OD was established as a social philosophy that emphasized a long-term orientation, the applied behavioural sciences, external and process-oriented consultation, change managed from the top, a strong emphasis on action research and a focus on creating change in collaboration with managers.

### The objectives, assumptions and values of the original version of OD

As originally conceived, OD programmes aimed to increase the effectiveness of the various processes that take place in organizations, especially those relating to the ways in which people work together. It was also concerned with improving the quality of people's working lives. The original OD philosophy was that of humanism – the belief that human factors are paramount in the study of organizational behaviour. This had its roots in the conclusions reached from the Hawthorne studies of 1924 to 1932 (Mayo, 1933; Roethlisberger and Dickson, 1939) that the productivity of workers increases when someone they respect takes an interest in them. The focus then turned to the needs of people as individuals and in groups with an emphasis on process – how people worked together and how this could be improved. The assumptions and values of OD were that:

- Most individuals are driven by the need for personal growth and development as long as their environment is both supportive and challenging.

- The work team, especially at the informal level, has great significance for feelings of satisfaction, and the dynamics of such teams have a powerful effect on the behaviour of their members.
- Organizations can be more effective if they learn to diagnose their own strengths and weaknesses.
- Managers often do not know what is wrong and need special help in diagnosing problems, although the outside ‘process consultant’ ensures that decision-making remains in the hands of the client.

### Traditional OD programmes

OD during this time was practised predominantly by external consultants working with senior managers. Personnel specialists were not involved to any great extent. OD programmes consisted then of ‘interventions’ such as those listed below. In OD jargon an intervention is a planned activity designed to improve organizational effectiveness or manage change. The following are the traditional OD interventions; they still feature in current programmes:

- *Process consultation* – helping clients to generate and analyse information that they can understand and, following a thorough diagnosis, act upon. The information relates to organizational processes such as inter-group relations, interpersonal relations and communications.
- *Change management* – often using the techniques advocated by Lewin (1951), which consisted of processes of managing change by unfreezing, changing and freezing, and force-field analysis (analysing and dealing with the driving forces that affect transition to a future state).
- *Action research* – collecting data from people about process issues and feeding it back in order to identify problems and their likely causes as a basis for an action plan to deal with the problem.
- *Appreciative enquiry* – a methodology that does not focus entirely on finding out what is wrong in order to solve problems. Instead it adopts the more positive approach of identifying ‘best practices’ – what is working well – and using that information as a basis

for planning change. It can be associated with action research.

- *Survey feedback* – a variety of action research in which data is systematically collected about the system through attitude surveys and workshops leading to action plans.
- *Group dynamics* – improving the ways in which people work together by means of programmes that aim to increase the effectiveness of groups through various forms of training, eg team building, interactive skills training and T-groups (‘training groups’, which aim to increase sensitivity, diagnostic ability and action skills).
- *Personal interventions* – developing interpersonal skills through such processes as transactional analysis (an approach to understanding how people behave and express themselves through transactions with others), behaviour modelling (the use of positive reinforcement and corrective feedback to change behaviour) and neurolinguistic programming or NLP (teaching people to programme their reactions to others and develop unconscious strategies for interacting with them).

### The second chapter – criticisms of the original version of OD and new approaches

The OD movement as originally conceived and practised was characterized by what Buchanan and Huczynski (2007: 559) called ‘quasi-religious values’ with some of the features of a religious movement, which, they claimed, is one reason why it has survived as a concept in spite of the criticisms that began to be levelled at it in the 1980s. Weidner (2004: 39) wrote that: ‘OD was something that practitioners felt and lived as much as they *believed*’ (original emphasis).

### Criticisms of OD

One of the earliest critics was McLean (1981: 4) who noted ‘the moral and ethical misgivings concerned with the development of what might be regarded as a sophisticated science of manipulation’. He cited a comment by Strauss (1976) that at times OD is little more than abstract moralization and asserted that:

It is becoming increasingly apparent that there exists a considerable discrepancy between OD as practised and the prescriptive stances taken by many OD writers... The theory of change and change management which is the foundation of most OD programmes is based on over-simplistic generalizations which offer little specific guidance to practitioners faced with the confusing complexity of a real change situation. (ibid: 13)

Armstrong (1984: 113) commented that: 'Organization development has lost a degree of credibility in recent years because the messianic zeal displayed by some practitioners has been at variance with the circumstances and real needs of the organization.' Burke (1995: 8) stated that 'in the mid-1970s, OD was still associated with T-groups, participative management and consensus, Theory Y, and self-actualization – the soft human, touchy-feely kinds of activities'.

An even more powerful critic was Legge (1995: 212), who observed that the OD rhetoric fitted the era of 'flower power' and that: 'OD was seen, on the one hand as a form of devious manipulation, and on the other as "wishy-washy" and ineffectual.' She noted 'the relative lack of success of OD initiatives in effecting major and lasting cultural change, with the aim of generating commitment to new values in the relatively small number of organizations in which it was tried' (ibid: 213), and produced the following devastating critique.

### Source review

A critique of organization development  
– Legge (1995: 213)

In order to cope with an increasingly complex and changing environment, many of the initiatives were, in retrospect, surprisingly inward looking, involving schemes of management development, work system design, attempts at participation, almost as a good in their own right, without close attention as to how they were to deliver against market-driven organizational success criteria. The long-term nature of OD activities, together with difficulties to clearly establishing to sceptics their contribution to organizational success criteria (and within a UK culture of financial short-termism) rendered the initiatives at best marginal... and at worst to be treated with a cynical contempt.

The main criticisms of OD, as noted by Marsh *et al* (2010: 143), were that it was: 'Oriented to process and tools rather than results... where techniques are considered to be ends in themselves rather than a means to deliver organizational performance.'

### New approaches

During the 1980s and 90s an alternative approach emerged, that of culture management, which aimed at achieving cultural change as a means of enhancing organizational capability. Culture change or culture management programmes start with an analysis of the existing culture, which may involve the use of a diagnostic such as the 'Organizational Culture Inventory' devised by Cooke and Lafferty (1989). The desired culture is then defined – one that enables the organization to function effectively and achieve its strategic objectives. As a result, a 'culture gap' is identified, which needs to be filled. This analysis of culture identifies behavioural expectations so that HR processes can be used to develop and reinforce them. This sounds easier than it really is. Culture is a complex and often hard to define notion and it is usually strongly embedded and therefore difficult to change. Anthony (1990: 4) argued that: 'The management of culture... purports to define the meaning of people's lives so that they become concomitant with the organization's view of itself. [It is] the adjustment of human meaning for organizational ends.' He also observed that: 'Published cases do exist of organizations within which major changes in culture have been successfully accomplished and shown to persist but they are rare' (ibid: 5). However, culture management became a process in its own right and OD consultants jumped on the bandwagon.

Culture management involves change management, another important item in the OD toolkit. But as Caldwell (2003: 132) argued: 'It is assumed within most OD models that change can be planned in a "rational" or linear manner, and that the change agent can facilitate this group process, although there is little evidence to support this illusion of "manageability".'

Other movements in this period that could be described as organization development activities but exist as distinct entities included total quality management (TQM) and quality circles. TQM aims to ensure that all activities within an organization happen in the way they have been planned in order to meet the defined needs of customers. Its approach



is holistic – quality management is not a separate function to be treated in isolation, but is an integral part of all operations. Quality circles are groups of volunteers engaged in related work who meet regularly to discuss and propose ways of improving working methods under a trained leader.

Another approach more closely related to OD that emerged at this time was organizational transformation. This was defined by Cummins and Worley (2005: 752) as: ‘A process of radically altering the organization’s strategic direction, including fundamental changes in structures, processes and behaviours.’

Holistic approaches to improving organizational capability emerging in this period, which were not part of what was conventionally known as OD, included high-performance working, high-commitment management, high-involvement management and performance management. The development of these systems in the 2000s led to a radically changed view of what constituted organization development.

### **The third chapter – changing the focus**

The most significant change in the 2000s was the shift to a strategic perspective. As noted by Cummins and Worley (2005: 12): ‘Change agents have proposed a variety of large-scale or strategic-change models; each of these models recognizes that strategic change involves multiple layers levels of the organization and a change in its culture, is driven from the top by powerful executives, and has important effects on performance.’ They also commented that the practice of organization development therefore went far beyond its humanistic origins. Another development was the emergence of the concept of ‘smart working’, as described in Chapter 11. This could be described as an OD intervention because it involves taking a fundamental look at methods of improving organizational effectiveness.

There was also more emphasis on associating organization design with organization development. Marsh *et al* (2010) suggested that organization design and organization development need to be merged into one HR capability, with organization design taking precedence. They considered that this should all be brought in-house as a necessary part of the business model innovation process. But as

they observed: ‘We do not believe that the field of organization development has passed its sell-by date. Far from it. It just needs to be repositioned as an HR capability’ (ibid: 143).

However, Weidner (2004: 37) made the following more pessimistic comment about OD: ‘Unfortunately, after sixty years – despite the best efforts and intentions of many talented people – OD finds itself increasingly at the margins of business, academe, and practice. The field continues to affirm its values, yet has no identifiable voice.’ OD ‘interventions’ still have a role to play in improving performance but as part of an integrated business and HR strategy planned and implemented by HR in conjunction with senior management, with or without outside help.

The main change that has taken place in the move from traditional OD to organizational development as practised currently is the focus on improving organizational performance and results through organization-wide initiatives. These do encompass the behaviour of people, especially when this relates to their levels of engagement (the degree to which people are committed to their work and the organization and motivated to achieve high levels of performance). But they are also concerned with the organizational processes that affect behaviour and engagement, namely, strategic HRM, work system design, smart working, high-performance working, organization design and job design.

## **Organization development strategy**

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Organization development strategy is founded on the aspiration to improve organizational capability, which is broadly the capacity of an organization to function effectively in order to achieve desired results. It has been defined more specifically by Ulrich and Lake (1990: 40) as ‘the ability to manage people for competitive advantage’. It is concerned with mapping out intentions on how the work system should be developed in line with the concept of smart working, on how the organization should be structured to meet new demands, on system-wide change in fields such as reward and performance management, on how change should be managed, on what needs to be done to improve organizational



processes involving people such as teamwork, communications and participation, and how the organization can acquire, retain, develop and engage the talent it needs. These intentions will be converted into actions on work systems development, structure design, the redesign of jobs and, possibly, OD-type interventions. The latter could take the form of action research, survey feedback and programmes for improving group processes and interpersonal skills, as described earlier in this chapter. The strategy can involve processes of integrated strategic change, as described below, and will be based on organizational diagnosis leading to the design of an organization development programme, as considered in the following sections.

### **Integrated strategic change**

The process of integrated strategic change as conceived by Worley *et al* (1996) can be used to formulate and implement organization development strategies. The steps required are:

- Strategic analysis, a review of the organization's strategic orientation (its strategic intentions within its competitive environment) and a diagnosis of the organization's readiness for change.
- Develop strategic capability – the ability to implement the strategic plan quickly and effectively.
- Integrate individuals and groups throughout the organization into the processes of analysis, planning and implementation to maintain the firm's strategic focus, direct attention and resources to the organization's key competencies, improve coordination and integration within the organization and create higher levels of shared ownership and commitment.
- Create the strategy, gain commitment and support for it and plan its implementation.
- Implement the strategic change plan, drawing on knowledge of motivation, group dynamics and change processes, dealing with issues such as alignment, adaptability, teamwork and organizational and individual learning.
- Allocate resources, provide feedback and solve problems as they arise.

## **Organizational diagnosis**

The practice of organization development is based on an analysis and diagnosis of the circumstances of the organization, the strategic, operational or process issues that are affecting the organization and its ability to perform well. As defined by Manzini (1988: ix): 'An organizational diagnosis is a systematic process of gathering data about a business organization – its problems, challenges, strengths and limitations – and analysing how such factors influence its ability to interact effectively and profitably with its business environment.' This involves the use of the diagnostic cycle with associated analytical and diagnostic tools, which enable those concerned with development to identify areas of concern that can be dealt with in an organization development programme.

### **The diagnostic cycle**

The diagnostic cycle as described by Manzini (1988: 11) consists of:

- data gathering;
- analysis;
- feedback;
- action planning;
- implementation;
- evaluation.

### **Analytical tools**

The two most used analytical tools are SWOT analysis and PESTLE analysis. A SWOT analysis is a 'looking in' and 'looking out' approach that covers the internal organizational factors of strengths and weaknesses and the external factors of opportunities and threats. PESTLE analysis is an environmental scanning tool that covers the following factors: political, economic, social, technological, legal and environmental.

### **Diagnostics**

Diagnostics are tools such as questionnaires or checklists that gather information about a business or on

the opinions and attitudes of employees in order to identify issues and problems that can be dealt with in an organization development programme. They enable those concerned with organization development to understand what is happening and why it is happening so that they can do something about it. Diagnostics can be used to assess overall organizational effectiveness in the shape of general strategic, business and operational issues, or they can deal with more specific areas of concern such as a review of the organization's ideology, culture or climate, or a survey of levels of engagement or commitment. Examples of the approach used by various diagnostic instruments are given below.

### Organizational ideology questionnaire (Harrison, 1972)

This questionnaire deals with the four orientations defined by Harrison (power, role, task and self). The questionnaire is completed by ranking statements according to views on what is closest to the organization's actual position. The following are examples of statements:

- a good boss is strong, decisive and firm but fair;
- a good subordinate is compliant, hard-working and loyal;
- people who do well in the organization are shrewd and competitive, with a strong need for power;
- the basis of task assignment is the personal needs and judgements of those in authority;
- decisions are made by people with the most knowledge and expertise about the problem.

### Organizational culture inventory (Cooke and Lafferty, 1989)

This instrument assesses organizational culture under 12 headings:

- 1 *Humanistic-helpful* – organizations managed in a participative and person-centred way.
- 2 *Affiliative* – organizations that place a high priority on constructive relationships.
- 3 *Approval* – organizations in which conflicts are avoided and interpersonal relationships are pleasant – at least superficially.

- 4 *Conventional* – conservative, traditional and bureaucratically controlled organizations.
- 5 *Dependent* – hierarchically controlled and non-participative organizations.
- 6 *Avoidance* – organizations that fail to reward success but punish mistakes.
- 7 *Oppositional* – organizations in which confrontation prevails and negativism is rewarded.
- 8 *Power* – organizations structured on the basis of the authority inherent in members' positions.
- 9 *Competitive* – a culture in which winning is valued and members are rewarded for out-performing one another.
- 10 *Competence/perfectionist* – organizations in which perfectionism, persistence and hard work are valued.
- 11 *Achievement* – organizations that do things well and value members who set and accomplish challenging but realistic goals.
- 12 *Self-actualization* – organizations that value creativity, quality over quantity, and both task accomplishment and individual growth.

### Typical dimensions of organizational climate questionnaires (Koys and De Cotiis, 1991)

- *Autonomy* – the perception of self-determination with respect to work procedures, goals and priorities.
- *Cohesion* – the perception of togetherness or sharing within the organization setting.
- *Trust* – the perception of freedom to communicate openly with members at higher organizational levels about sensitive or personal issues with the expectation that the integrity of such communications will not be violated.
- *Resource* – the perception of time demands with respect to task completion and performance standards.

- *Support* – the perception of the degree to which superiors tolerate members' behaviour, including willingness to let members learn from their mistakes without fear of reprisal.
- *Recognition* – the perception that members' contributions to the organization are acknowledged.
- *Fairness* – the perception that organizational policies are non-arbitrary or capricious.
- *Innovation* – the perception that change and creativity are encouraged, including risk-taking into new areas where the member has little or no prior experience.

## Employee attitude or opinion surveys

A number of organizations conduct attitude or opinion surveys on behalf of their clients. Apart from the advantage of being well-tested and professionally administered they also facilitate benchmarking. Surveys provided by such organizations include the CIPD People and Performance employee questionnaire, the IES engagement survey, the Gallup engagement survey and the Saratoga engagement and commitment matrix.

A toolkit for designing and using attitude surveys is provided in Chapter 73 of this handbook, which includes an example of a general attitude survey.

## Organization development programmes

The traditional OD programme was behavioural science-based and almost entirely devoted to interpersonal relationships, organizational processes and culture change in the broadest sense. There may still be a need for such interventions today but organization development is a more eclectic affair – anything can be included under the organization development heading as long as it contributes to organizational effectiveness. As explained below there is a choice of activities and some examples are given of approaches to a major organization development initiative, namely culture change.

## Organization development activities

The choice is from activities such as those set out in Table 12.1.

These activities can be combined in many ways so that they become mutually supporting. Ones such as culture change and team building can include traditional OD interventions such as action learning, survey feedback and group dynamics. It can be argued that change management is not a separate organization development activity but is a fundamental part of all such activities. Each of those listed above involves change, which has to be managed using the sort of change management skills described in Chapter 54. The following examples of culture change activities drawn from research conducted by the CIPD (2011) illustrate the range of activities covered under the broad heading culture change:

- *Arts Council England Interventions* focused on the organizational structure, embedding the new values and demonstrating leadership commitment for the culture change.
- *Children's Trust Southampton Interventions* focused on the organization's structure, developing values to support the strategy and structure.
- *London Borough of Barnet Interventions* centred on establishing a Lean team to drive the project. Front-line staff were at the heart of the process, which involves them identifying what's wrong with the service and how things could be improved.
- *National Police Improvements Agency* activities include a restructuring of the top management team, a review of existing processes, the involvement of stakeholders and a focus on retaining respect for past ways of working.
- *NP Paribas* focused activities on the organization's structure, processes, values and the importance of leadership.
- *Visa Europe* established a culture change programme that was called 'peak performance'. The process focused on the individual and helping each individual to recognize how their own values and aspirations could be connected with those of the organization in a mutually beneficial way.

**TABLE 12.1** Organization development activities

Organization development activity	Brief description	Objective
Business model innovation	The process followed by an organization to develop a new business model or change an existing one.	To obtain insight into the business issues facing the organization, leading to plans for practical interventions that address those issues.
Change management	The process of planning and introducing change systematically, taking into account the likelihood of it being resisted.	To achieve the smooth implementation of change.
Culture change	The process of changing the organization's culture in the shape of its values, norms and beliefs.	To improve organizational effectiveness – the ability of an organization to achieve its goals by making effective use of the resources available to it.
Engagement, enhancement of	The development of improved levels of job and organizational engagement.	To ensure that people are committed to their work and the organization and motivated to achieve high levels of performance.
High-performance working	Developing work system processes, practices and policies to enable employees to perform to their full potential.	To impact on the performance of the organization through its people in such areas as productivity, quality, levels of customer service, growth and profits.
Knowledge management	Storing and sharing the wisdom, understanding and expertise accumulated in an organization about its processes, techniques and operations.	To get knowledge from those who have it to those who need it in order to improve organizational effectiveness.
Lean	A process improvement methodology that focuses on continuous improvement, reducing waste and ensuring the flow of production.	To deliver value to customers.

**TABLE 12.1** Continued

Organization development activity	Brief description	Objective
Organizational learning	The acquisition and development of knowledge, understanding, insights, techniques and practices.	To facilitate performance improvement and major changes in strategic direction.
Organization design	The process of deciding how organizations should be structured in terms of the ways in which the responsibility for carrying out the overall task is allocated to individuals and groups of people and how the relationships between them function.	To ensure that people work effectively together to achieve the overall purpose of the organization.
Performance management	A systematic process involving the agreement of performance expectations and the review of how those expectations have been met.	To improve organizational performance by developing the performance of individuals and teams.
Smart working	An approach to organizing work that through a combination of flexibility, autonomy and collaboration, in parallel with optimizing tools and working environments for employees.	To drive greater efficiency and effectiveness in achieving job outcomes.
Team building	Using interactive skills training techniques to improve the ways in which people in teams work together.	To increase group cohesion, mutual support and cooperation.
Total rewards	The combination of financial and non-financial rewards available to employees. It involves integrating the various aspects of reward.	To blend the financial and non-financial elements of reward into a cohesive whole so that together they make a more powerful and longer-lasting impact on job satisfaction and performance.

## Conclusions on organization development

Organization development is no longer solely the preserve of external process consultants with behavioural science backgrounds. Instead it is a territory frequently inhabited by business-oriented people based in the organization and acting, in effect, as internal consultants. They include HR specialists who are there not just because they know about HRM but because they are familiar with how businesses operate and where people management fits in.

The organization development processes with which internal specialists and their colleagues are concerned will be determined by the outcome of diagnostic reviews. Because these outcomes will always be different, organizational development programmes will always be different. There is no such thing as a standard 'OD' approach, as was formerly the case. A number of approaches are available, but which to use and how to use is a matter of choice depending on the facts of the situation. This is why the initial analysis and diagnosis is so important. An analytical toolkit for organization development is provided in Chapter 63.

### Key learning points: Organization development

#### Organization development defined

Organization development in its traditional form as 'OD' was defined by Rowlandson (1984: 90) as 'an intervention strategy that uses group processes to focus on the whole culture of an organization in order to bring about planned change'. The CIPD (2010: 1) defined organization development as a 'planned and systematic approach to enabling sustained organization performance through the involvement of its people'.

#### Strategic nature of organization development

The strategic nature of organization development as an integral part of HRM arises because it can play a significant role in the implementation of business strategy.

#### Assumptions and values of OD

The assumptions and values of OD as originally conceived were that:

- Most individuals are driven by the need for personal growth and development as long as their environment is both supportive and challenging.
- The work team, especially at the informal level, has great significance for feelings of satisfaction

and the dynamics of such teams have a powerful effect on the behaviour of their members.

- OD programmes aim to improve the quality of working life of all members of the organization.
- Organizations can be more effective if they learn to diagnose their own strengths and weaknesses.
- Managers often do not know what is wrong and need special help in diagnosing problems, although the outside 'process consultant' ensures that decision-making remains in the hands of the client.

#### OD interventions

OD interventions include process consultation, change management, action research, survey feedback, group dynamics and personal interventions.

#### Criticisms of OD

The main criticisms of OD, as noted by Marsh *et al* (2010: 143), were that it was 'Oriented to process and tools rather than results... where techniques are considered to be ends in themselves rather than a means to deliver organizational performance.'

### Organization development strategy

Organization development strategy is based on the aspiration to improve organizational capability, which is broadly the capacity of an organization to function effectively in order to achieve desired results.

### The practice of organization development

The practice of organization development is based on an analysis and diagnosis of the circumstances of the organization, the strategic, operational or process issues that are affecting the organization

and its ability to perform well. This involves the use of diagnostic tools.

### Organization development programmes

The traditional OD programme was behavioural science-based and almost entirely devoted to interpersonal relationships, organizational processes and culture change in the broadest sense. There may still be a need for such interventions today but the emphasis now is on much more focused activities to do with high-performance working, Lean manufacturing, smart working and the enhancement of levels of engagement.

## Questions

- 1 What was the original concept of organization development?
- 2 What is an OD intervention?
- 3 What are the most typical types of interventions?
- 4 What were the main criticisms made of OD in the 1980s and 1990s?
- 5 How has the approach to OD altered since then?

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# PART III

## Factors affecting employee behaviour

### PART III CONTENTS

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- 13 Motivation
- 14 Commitment
- 15 Employee engagement

### Introduction

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A preoccupation shared by all those involved in managing people is how to get the best out of them. ‘The best’ may be difficult to define. It could be high performance. Or it could be discretionary behaviour (the choice made by people to exercise additional effort, care, innovation and productive behaviour in their jobs). It could be doing more than is contracted for so that the words ‘it’s not in my job description’ or ‘this is above my pay grade’ are seldom if ever heard. It could be cooperating fully with managers and colleagues or showing loyalty to the organization. It could be any combination of these.

Getting the best out of people is primarily the responsibility of managers and team leaders by exercising effective leadership. But it is also the concern of HR specialists who can help to create a work environment conducive to high performance and can introduce policies and practices that encourage people to do everything expected of them if not more. HR can also provide any advice and help managers to fulfil their people management responsibilities.

To do this, managers and HR specialists need to take into account the general factors that affect how people behave at work, as described in Chapter 10 – namely, ability, intelligence, personality, attitudes,

emotions and emotional intelligence. But they should also be aware of the following more specific factors that influence behaviour and therefore performance:

- *Motivation* – the strength and direction of behaviour and the factors that influence people to behave in certain ways.
- *Commitment* – the strength of an individual’s identification with, and involvement in, an organization.
- *Engagement* – a situation in which people are committed to their work and the organization and are motivated to achieve high levels of performance.

These are examined in the three chapters of this part.

Of the three constructs (a construct is a conceptual framework that explains how people perceive and react to their environment), motivation is a long-standing one that has been extensively researched and written about since the earlier part of the 20th century. Motivation theory has been used and is still used to inform decisions on how to get more effort and better performance from employees, for example the use of performance-related pay. The importance of the construct of commitment emerged later,

notably in the contribution of Richard Walton (1985) whose seminal article in the *Harvard Business Review* advocated the adoption of a commitment strategy rather than one based on control. The most recent construct is that of engagement, which was first presented in a 1990 *Academy of Management Journal* article by William Kahn. He defined engagement as ‘the harnessing of organization members’ selves to their work roles’ (1990: 694).

The construct of engagement contains elements of motivation and commitment, as explained in Chapter 14. It also embraces the notion of organizational citizenship behaviour (OCB), which is positive discretionary behaviour at work that goes beyond role requirements. The relationships between engagement, motivation and OCB are considered in Chapter 15.

However, it is difficult to disentangle the concepts of motivation, commitment and engagement, although an attempt to do so is made in the three chapters of this part. Simplistically, it could be argued that when motivation is extrinsic, ie when things are done to or for people in order to motivate them, such as through pay or recognition, the aim is to

make a direct impact on individual performance. In contrast, both commitment and engagement are states of being that can be affected by managerial actions. They are not so direct or immediate as the direct instruments used in the motivation strategies aimed at individuals. Engagement and commitment strategies may be more about taking action that affects employees collectively such as improvements in the work environment.

Three other aspects of the behaviour of people at work are considered in this part. The first of these is job satisfaction, ie the attitudes and feelings that people have about their jobs. This is associated with motivation and engagement but it could be regarded as an outcome of engagement rather than a constituent of it. Whether or not job satisfaction improves performance is considered in Chapters 13 and 15. Second, the relationship between money and motivation is examined in Chapter 13. This is important because it affects policies and practices concerned with the use of pay as an incentive or reward. Third, reference is made in Chapter 15 to the dark side of engagement – burnout – how it happens and what can be done about it.

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# 13

## Motivation

### KEY CONCEPTS AND TERMS

Cognitive evaluation	Herzberg's two-factor model of
Content (needs) motivation theory	motivation
Discretionary behaviour	Intrinsic motivation
Discretionary effort	Instrumentality
Equity theory	Job characteristics model
Expectancy theory	Job satisfaction
Extrinsic motivation	Law of effect
Goal theory	Line of sight
	Management by objectives

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

On completing this chapter you should be able to define these key concepts. You should also understand:

- The meaning of motivation
- Types of motivation
- The different motivation theories
- Motivation and job satisfaction
- Approaches to developing a motivation strategy

### Introduction

Motivation is the force that energizes, directs and sustains behaviour. High performance is achieved by well-motivated people who are prepared to exercise discretionary effort, ie independently do more than is expected of them. Even in fairly basic roles, Hunter *et al* (1990) found through their research that the difference in value-added discretionary

performance between 'superior' and 'standard' performers was 19 per cent. For highly complex jobs it was 48 per cent. The aims of this chapter are to explore the meaning of motivation, define the two main types of motivation – intrinsic and extrinsic, describe and critically evaluate the main theories of motivation, discuss two related aspects of motivation – its relationship to job satisfaction and money, and outline approaches to motivation strategy.

## The meaning of motivation

The term ‘motivation’ derives from the Latin word for movement (*movere*). A motive is a reason for doing something. Motivation is the strength and direction of behaviour and the factors that influence people to behave in certain ways. People are motivated when they expect that a course of action is likely to lead to the attainment of a goal and a valued reward – one that satisfies their needs and wants. The term ‘motivation’ can refer variously to the goals that individuals have, the ways in which individuals chose their goals and the ways in which others try to change their behaviour. Locke and Latham (2004: 388) observed that: ‘The concept of motivation refers to internal factors that impel action and to external factors that can act as inducements to action.’

As described by Arnold *et al* (1991) the three components of motivation are:

- 1 *Direction* – what a person is trying to do.
- 2 *Effort* – how hard a person is trying.
- 3 *Persistence* – how long a person keeps on trying.

Well-motivated people engage in positive discretionary behaviour – they decide to make an effort. Such people may be self-motivated, and as long as this means they are going in the right direction to attain what they are there to achieve, then this is the best form of motivation. But additional motivation provided by the work itself, the quality of leadership, and various forms of recognition and reward, builds on self-motivation and helps people to make the best use of their abilities and to perform well.

There are two types of motivation and a number of theories explaining how it works, as discussed below.

## Types of motivation

### Intrinsic motivation

Intrinsic motivation takes place when individuals feel that their work is important, interesting and challenging and that it provides them with a reasonable degree of autonomy (freedom to act), opportunities to achieve and advance, and scope to use and develop their skills and abilities. It can be described as

motivation by the work itself. It is not created by external incentives. Deci and Ryan (1985) suggested that intrinsic motivation is based on the need to be competent and self-determining (that is, to have a choice). Michael Sandel (2012: 122) remarked that: ‘When people are engaged in an activity they consider intrinsically worthwhile, offering money may weaken their motivation by “crowding out” their intrinsic interest or commitment’.

Intrinsic motivation can be enhanced by job design. Katz (1964) suggested that jobs should in themselves provide sufficient variety, complexity, challenge and skill to engage the abilities of the worker. Hackman and Oldham (1974) in their job characteristics model identified the five core characteristics of jobs that result in intrinsic motivation, namely: skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy and feedback. Pink (2009) stated that there are three steps that managers can take to improve motivation:

- 1 *Autonomy* – encourage people to set their own schedule and focus on getting work done not how it is done.
- 2 *Mastery* – help people to identify the steps they can take to improve and ask them to identify how they will know they are making progress.
- 3 *Purpose* – when giving instructions explain the *why* as well as the *how*.

Intrinsic motivation is associated with the concept of engagement, as explained in Chapter 15.

### Extrinsic motivation

Extrinsic motivation occurs when things are done to or for people in order to motivate them. These include rewards such as incentives, increased pay, praise or promotion; and punishments such as disciplinary action, withholding pay, or criticism.

Extrinsic motivators can have an immediate and powerful effect, but it will not necessarily last long. The intrinsic motivators, which are concerned with the ‘quality of working life’ (a phrase and movement that emerged from this concept), are likely to have a deeper and longer-term effect because they are inherent in individuals and the work – and are not imposed from outside in such forms as incentive pay.

Motivation theory as described below explains the ways in which intrinsic and extrinsic motivation take place.

## Motivation theory

As mentioned by Steers *et al* (2004: 379) the earliest approaches to understanding human motivation date from the time of the Greek philosophers and focus on the concept of hedonism as a principle driving force in behaviour. Individuals were seen as directing their efforts to seeking pleasure and avoiding pain. This principle was later refined and further developed in the works of philosophers such as John Locke and Jeremy Bentham in the 17th and 18th centuries. Motivation theory has moved on from then. It started in the earlier part of the 20th century with the contributions of the exponents of scientific management (instrumentality theory). In the middle years of that century the behavioural scientists entered the field and began to develop the ‘content’ or ‘needs’ theory of motivation. The main process theories such as expectancy theory emerged in the in the 1960s and 70s, although the first formulation of the process theory of reinforcement took place in 1911. The three main areas of motivation theory – instrumentality, content and process – are examined below.

### Instrumentality theory

Instrumentality theory states in effect that rewards and punishments are the best instruments with which to shape behaviour. It assumes that people will be motivated to work if rewards and penalties are tied directly to their performance; thus the awards are contingent upon effective performance. Instrumentality theory has its roots in the scientific management methods of Taylor (1911: 121) who wrote: ‘It is impossible, through any long period of time, to get workmen to work much harder than the average men around them unless they are assured a large and a permanent increase in their pay.’

This theory provides a rationale for financial incentives such as performance-related pay, albeit a dubious one. Motivation using this approach has been and still is widely adopted. It may be successful in some circumstances, eg piece work, but – for reasons explained in Chapter 27 – merit or performance pay is flawed.

Instrumentality theory relies exclusively on a system of external controls and does not recognize a number of other human needs. It also fails to appreciate the fact that the formal control system can

be seriously affected by the informal relationship existing between workers.

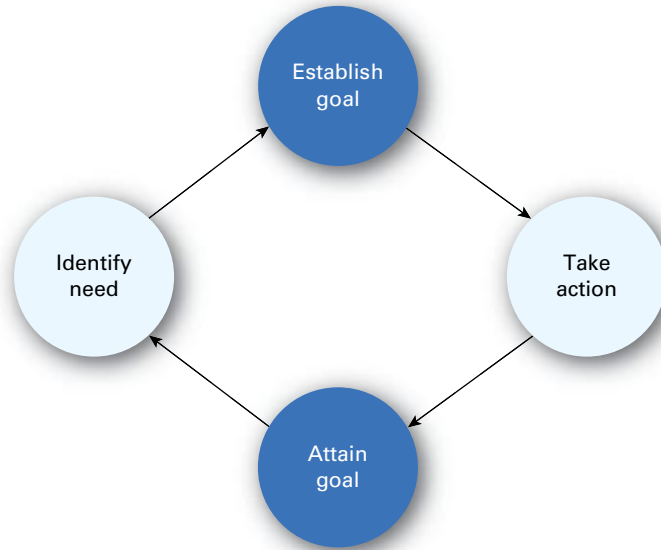
### Content theory

The aim of the content or needs theories produced by Maslow, Alderfer, McClelland, Herzberg, and Deci and Ryan was to identify the factors associated with motivation. The theory focuses on the content of motivation in the shape of needs. Its basis is the belief that an unsatisfied need creates tension and a state of disequilibrium. To restore the balance a goal is identified that will satisfy the need, and a behaviour pathway is selected that will lead to the achievement of the goal and the satisfaction of the need. Behaviour is therefore motivated by unsatisfied needs. A content theory model is shown in Figure 13.1. Content theory, as the term implies, indicates the components of motivation but it does not explain how motivation affects performance – a necessary requirement if the concept is to provide guidance on HR policy and practice. This was the role of expectancy theory, as will be discussed later.

### Maslow’s hierarchy of needs

The most famous classification of needs is the one formulated by Maslow (1954). He suggested that there are five major need categories that apply to people in general, starting from the fundamental physiological needs and leading through a hierarchy of safety, social and esteem needs to the need for self-fulfilment, the highest need of all. When a lower need is satisfied the next highest becomes dominant and the individual’s attention is turned to satisfying this higher need. The need for self-fulfilment, however, can never be satisfied. ‘Man is a wanting animal’; only an unsatisfied need can motivate behaviour and the dominant need is the prime motivator of behaviour. Psychological development takes place as people move up the hierarchy of needs, but this is not necessarily a straightforward progression. The lower needs still exist, even if temporarily dormant as motivators, and individuals constantly return to previously satisfied needs.

Maslow’s needs hierarchy has an intuitive appeal and has been very popular. But it has not been verified by empirical research such as that conducted by Wahba and Bridwell (1979), and it has been criticized for its apparent rigidity – different people may have different priorities and the underpinning assumption

**FIGURE 13.1** The process of motivation according to content theory

that everyone has the same needs is invalid. It is difficult to accept that needs progress steadily up the hierarchy and Maslow himself expressed doubts about the validity of a strictly ordered hierarchy. But he did emphasize that the higher-order needs are more significant.

### ERG theory (Alderfer)

Alderfer (1972) produced a more convincing and simpler theory, which postulated three primary categories of needs:

- 1 *Existence needs* such as hunger and thirst – pay, fringe benefits and working conditions are other types of existence needs.
- 2 *Relatedness needs*, which acknowledge that people are not self-contained units but must engage in transactions with their human environment – acceptance, understanding, confirmation and influence are elements of the relatedness process.
- 3 *Growth needs*, which involve people in finding the opportunities to be what they are most fully and to become what they can. This is the most significant need.

### McClelland's achievement motivation

An alternative way of classifying needs was developed by McClelland (1961), who based it mainly on studies of managers. He identified three needs of which the need for achievement was the most important:

- 1 The need for *achievement*, defined as the need for competitive success measured against a personal standard of excellence.
- 2 The need for *affiliation*, defined as the need for warm, friendly, compassionate relationships with others.
- 3 The need for *power*, defined as the need to control or influence others.

### Herzberg's two-factor model

The two-factor model of motivation developed by Herzberg (1957, 1966) was based on an investigation into the sources of job satisfaction and dissatisfaction of accountants and engineers who were asked what made them feel exceptionally good or exceptionally bad about their jobs. According to Herzberg, this

research established that there were two factors that affected feelings of satisfaction or dissatisfaction. Motivating factors or ‘satisfiers’ relate to the job content and consist of the need for achievement, the interest of the work, responsibility and opportunities for advancement. These needs are the intrinsic motivators. He summed this up in the phrase ‘motivation by the work itself’.

Hygiene factors relate to the job context, including such things as pay and working conditions. ‘Hygiene’ is used in the medical use of the term, meaning preventative and environmental. In themselves hygiene factors neither satisfy nor motivate and they serve primarily to prevent job dissatisfaction, while having little effect on positive job attitudes. Pay is not a satisfier but if it is inadequate or inequitable it can cause dissatisfaction. However, its provision does not provide lasting satisfaction.

Herzberg’s two-factor theory in effect identifies needs but it has been attacked by, for example, Opsahl and Dunnette (1966). The research method has been criticized because no attempt was made to measure the relationship between satisfaction and performance. It has been claimed that the two-factor nature of the theory is an inevitable result of the questioning method used by the interviewers. It has also been suggested that wide and unwarranted inferences have been drawn from small and specialized samples and that there is no evidence to suggest that the satisfiers do improve productivity. The underpinning assumption that everyone has the same needs is invalid. Denise Rousseau (2006: 263) in her presidential address to the US Academy of Management summed up these views as follows: ‘Herzberg’s long discredited two-factor theory is typically included in the motivation section of management textbooks, despite the fact that it was discredited as an artefact of method bias over thirty years ago.’

In spite of these objections, the Herzberg two-factor theory continues to thrive; partly because it is easy to understand and seems to be based on real-life rather than academic abstractions, and partly because it convincingly emphasizes the positive value of the intrinsic motivating factors and highlights the need to consider both financial and non-financial factors when developing reward systems. It is also in accord with a fundamental belief in the dignity of labour and the Protestant ethic – that work is good in itself. Herzberg’s strength as a proselytizer rather than a researcher

meant that he had considerable influence on the job enrichment movement, which sought to design jobs in a way that would maximize the opportunities to obtain intrinsic satisfaction from work and thus improve the quality of working life. Herzberg famously remarked that if you want people to do a good job then give them a good job to do (quoted by Dowling, 1971).

## Self-determination theory

As formulated by Deci and Ryan (2000) this theory states that individuals are motivated by the need to achieve three fundamental goals: striving for competence, autonomy and relatedness.

## Comment on content theories

Shields (2007: 74) observed that content theories share some common shortcomings. His criticisms were that they incorrectly assume:

- the existence of a universally applicable set of human needs;
- that according to Maslow (1954), needs conform to a simple ordered hierarchy of need importance, when in reality, needs seem to operate in a more flexible, less ordered and predictable way;
- that the link between needs and behaviours is direct and automatic, rather than mediated by human consciousness, values and choice.

In addition, he pointed out that content theories ‘underestimate the motivational potency of extrinsic rewards, including financial rewards’.

## Process theory

In process theory, the emphasis is on the psychological or mental processes and forces that affect motivation, as well as on basic needs. It is also known as cognitive theory because it refers to people’s perceptions of their working environment and the ways in which they interpret and understand it. The main process theories are concerned with reinforcement, expectancy, goals, equity, and cognitive evaluation.

## Reinforcement theory

This is the oldest and least complex of the process theories. It is based on ‘the law of effect’ as formulated



by Thorndike (1911), which states that over time people learn about the relationships between their actions and the consequences of them and this understanding guides their future behaviour. In other words, if they believe that something has worked previously then they will do it again. It was later developed by Hull (1943, 1951).

Skinner (1953) and others later built on these principles with the notion of 'operant conditioning', which was influenced by the work of Pavlov and his salivating dogs. As Shields (2007: 76) put it: 'Positive reinforcement of desired behaviour elicits more of the same; punishment of undesired behaviour (negative reinforcement) elicits less of the same.' Reinforcement models continue to thrive today as explanatory vehicles for understanding work motivation and job performance, and as a justification of performance pay.

But reinforcement theory can be criticized for taking an unduly mechanistic view of human nature. It implies that people can be motivated by treating them as machines – by pulling levers. In assuming that the present choices of individuals are based on an understanding of the outcomes of their past choices, reinforcement theory ignores the existing context in which choices are made. In addition, motivational theories based on the principle of reinforcement pay insufficient attention to the influence of expectations – no indication is given of how to distinguish in advance which outcomes would strengthen responses and which would weaken them. Above all, they are limited because they imply, in Allport's (1954) vivid phrase, a hedonism of the past.

## Expectancy theory

Expectancy theory states that motivation will be high when people know what they have to do in order to get a reward, expect that they will be able to get the reward and expect that the reward will be worthwhile.

The concept of expectancy was originally contained in the valency-instrumentality-expectancy (VIE) theory that was formulated by Vroom (1964). Valency stands for value; instrumentality is the belief that if we do one thing it will lead to another; and expectancy is the probability that action or effort will lead to an outcome.

The strength of expectations may be based on past experiences (reinforcement), but individuals are

frequently presented with new situations – a change in job, payment system, or working conditions imposed by management – where past experience is an inadequate guide to the implications of the change. In these circumstances, motivation may be reduced.

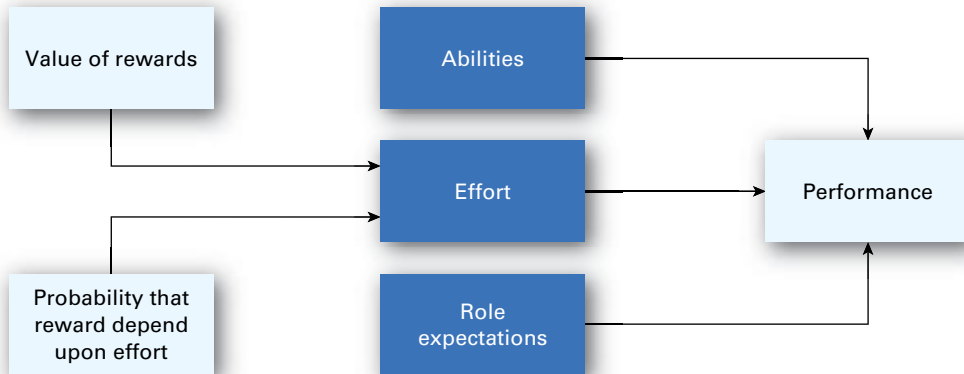
Motivation is only likely when a clearly perceived and usable relationship exists between performance and outcome, and the outcome is seen as a means of satisfying needs. This explains why extrinsic financial motivation – for example, an incentive or bonus scheme – works only if the link (line of sight) between effort and reward is clear and the value of the reward is worth the effort. It also explains why intrinsic motivation arising from the work itself can be more powerful than extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation outcomes are more under the control of individuals, who can place greater reliance on their past experiences to indicate the extent to which positive and advantageous results are likely to be obtained by their behaviour.

This theory was developed by Porter and Lawler (1968) into a model shown in Figure 13.2, which follows Vroom's ideas by suggesting that there are two factors determining the effort that people put into their jobs: first, the value of the rewards to individuals in so far as they satisfy their needs for security, social esteem, autonomy and self-actualization; second, the probability that rewards depend on effort, as perceived by individuals – in other words, their expectations about the relationships between effort and reward. Thus, the greater the value of a set of awards and the higher the probability that receiving each of these rewards depends upon effort, the greater the effort that will be put forth in a given situation.

But, as Porter and Lawler emphasized, mere effort is not enough. It has to be effective effort if it is to produce the desired performance. The two variables additional to effort that affect task achievement are: 1) ability – individual characteristics such as intelligence, knowledge, skills; 2) role perceptions – what the individual wants to do or thinks they are required to do. These are good from the viewpoint of the organization if they correspond with what it thinks the individual ought to be doing. They are poor if the views of the individual and the organization do not coincide.

Alongside goal theory (see below), expectancy theory has become the most influential motivation theory, particularly as it affects performance and



**FIGURE 13.2** Motivation model (Porter and Lawler, 1968)

reward management. But reservations have been expressed about it. House *et al* (1974) remarked that: ‘Evidence for the validity of the theory is very mixed.’ They also established that there were a number of variables affecting expectations that make it difficult to predict how they function. These are:

- Leadership behaviour – the function of the leader in clarifying expectations, guiding, supporting and rewarding subordinates.
- Individual characteristics – the subjects’ perception of their ability to perform the required task.
- Nature of the task – whether accomplishing the task provides the necessary reinforcements and rewards.
- The practices of the organization – its reward and control systems and how it functions.

Research conducted by Behling and Starke (1973) established that individuals:

- make crucial personal decisions without clearly understanding the consequences;
- do not in practice consistently evaluate their order of preference for alternative actions;
- have to assign two values when making a decision – its desirability and its achievability – but they tend to be influenced mainly by desirability – they let their tastes influence their beliefs;

- may be able to evaluate the extrinsic rewards they expect but may find it difficult to evaluate the possibility of achieving intrinsic rewards;
- may find it difficult to distinguish the benefits of one possible outcome from another.

They concluded that: ‘Expectancy theory can account for some of the variations in work effort but far less than normally attributed to it’ (ibid 386).

Shields (2007: 80) commented that a problem with expectancy theory is that it assumes that ‘behaviour is rational and premeditated when we know that much workplace behaviour is impulsive and emotional’.

However, in spite of these objections, the simple message of expectancy theory – that people will be motivated if they expect that their behaviour will produce a worthwhile reward – is compelling. And it provides a useful tool to assess the effectiveness of motivating devices such as performance-related pay.

## Goal theory

Goal theory as developed by Latham and Locke (1979) following their research states that motivation and performance are higher when individuals are set specific goals, when goals are demanding but accepted, and when there is feedback on performance. Goals must be clearly defined. Participation in goal setting is important as a means of getting agreement to the setting of demanding goals. Feedback is vital in maintaining motivation, particularly towards the achievement of even higher goals.

However, the universality of goal theory has been questioned. For example, Pintrich (2000) noted that people have different goals in different circumstances and that it is hard to justify the assumption that goals are always accessible and conscious. And Harackiewicz *et al* (2002) warned that goals are only effective when they are consistent with and match the general context in which they are pursued. But support for goal theory was provided by Bandura and Cervone (1983) who emphasized the importance of self-efficacy (a belief in one's ability to accomplish goals).

### Equity theory

Equity theory, as defined by Adams (1965), is concerned with the perceptions people have about how they are being treated as compared with others. He proposed that employees assess the fairness or otherwise of their rewards (outcomes) in relation to their effort or qualifications (inputs) and that they do this by comparing their own input/output ratio against that of other individuals. If the input/output ratio is perceived to be unfavourable, they will feel that there is reward inequity.

Equity theory explains only one aspect of the processes of motivation and job satisfaction, although it may be significant in terms of morale and, possibly, of performance.

### Social learning theory

Social learning theory as developed by Bandura (1977) combines aspects of both reinforcement and expectancy theory. It recognizes the significance of the basic behavioural concept of reinforcement as a determinant of future behaviour but also emphasizes the importance of internal psychological factors, especially expectancies about the value of goals and the individual's ability to reach them. The term 'reciprocal determinism' is used to denote the concept that while the situation will affect individual behaviour individuals will simultaneously influence the situation.

### Cognitive evaluation theory

Cognitive evaluation theory contends that the use of extrinsic rewards may destroy the intrinsic motivation that flows from inherent job interest. It was formulated by Deci and Ryan (1985). Referring to their research, they stated that: 'Rewards, like

feedback, when used to convey to people a sense of appreciation for work well done, will tend to be experienced informationally and will maintain or enhance intrinsic motivation. But when they are used to motivate people, they will be experienced controllingly and will undermine intrinsic motivation.'

Deci *et al* (1999) followed up this research by carrying out a meta-analysis of 128 experiments on rewards and intrinsic motivation to establish the extent to which intrinsic motivation was undermined by rewards. The results of the study indicated that for high-interest tasks, rewards had significant negative effects on what the researchers called 'free-choice measures', which included the time spent on the task after the reward was removed.

But as noted by Gerhart and Rynes (2003: 52): 'The vast majority of research on this theory has been performed in school rather than work settings, often with elementary school-aged children.' But that did not stop other commentators assuming that the results were equally significant for working adults. It is interesting to note that research in industry conducted by Deci and Ryan (1985), while it found that financial incentives did decrease intrinsic motivation in high-control organizational cultures, also established that in organizations with the opposite high-involvement culture, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation were both increased by monetary incentives. Context is all important. Moreover, a meta-analysis of 145 studies conducted by Cameron *et al* (2001) led to the conclusion that rewards do not inevitably have negative effects on intrinsic motivation.

### Purposeful work behaviour

A more recent integrated motivation theory formulated by Barrick and Mount (2013) focused on the impact on motivation of individual factors, such as personality and ability, and situational factors, such as job characteristics. The motivation to engage in purposeful work behaviour depends on both these factors.

### Comment on process theories

Process theories are not based on suspect assumptions about the universality of needs, as are content theories. Process theories emphasize the importance of individual decision-making on work behaviour. As pointed out by Shields (2007: 85) They 'acknowledge the importance of social and job context

as co-determinants of motivational strength while those other than reinforcement theory also highlight the importance of self-efficacy, task or goal clarity and motivational learning’.

### Summary of motivation theories

A summary of motivation theories is set out in Table 13.1.

### Conclusions on motivation theory

All the theories referred to above make some contribution to an understanding of the processes that affect motivation. But instrumentality theory provides only a simplistic explanation of how motivation works. Needs and content theories are more sophisticated but have their limitations. As Gerhart and Rynes (2003: 53) commented:

Although the ideas developed by Maslow, Herzberg and Deci have had considerable appeal to many people, the prevailing view in the academic literature is that the specific predictions of these theories is not supported by empirical evidence. On the other hand it would be a mistake to underestimate the influence that these theories have had on research and practice. Pfeffer, Kohn and others continue to base their argument regarding the ineffectiveness of money as a motivator on such theories.

But, bearing in mind the reservations set out earlier, needs theory still offers an indication of the factors that motivate people and content theory provides useful explanations of how motivation takes place. And while instrumentality and reinforcement theories may be simplistic they still explain some aspects of how rewards affect motivation and performance and they continue to exert influence on the beliefs of some people about the power of incentives to motivate people. Herzberg’s research may be flawed but he still contributed to the recognition of the importance of job design.

Motivation theory can explain what makes people tick at work but it is also necessary to consider two other aspects of the impact of motivation – its relationship with job satisfaction and the effect of money on motivation. Strategies for motivation based on the lessons learnt from motivation theory are considered at the end of this chapter.

## Motivation and job satisfaction

Job satisfaction can be defined as the attitudes and feelings people have about their work. Positive and favourable attitudes towards the job indicate job satisfaction. Negative and unfavourable attitudes towards the job indicate job dissatisfaction. It can be distinguished from morale, which is a group rather than individual variable, related to the degree to which group members feel attracted to their group and want to remain a member of it.

### The factors that affect job satisfaction

Levels of job satisfaction or dissatisfaction are influenced by:

- *The intrinsic motivating factors.* These relate to job content, especially the five dimensions of jobs identified by Hackman and Oldham (1974): skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy and feedback (the job characteristics model).
- *The quality of supervision.* The Hawthorne studies (Roethlisberger and Dixon, 1939) resulted in the claim that supervision is the most important determinant of worker attitudes. Elton Mayo (1933) believed that a man’s desire to be continuously associated in work with his fellows is a strong, if not the strongest human characteristic.
- *Success or failure.* Success obviously creates satisfaction, especially if it enables individuals to prove to themselves that they are using their abilities to the full. And it is equally obvious that the reverse is true of failure.

### Job satisfaction and performance

It is a commonly held and not unreasonable belief that an increase in job satisfaction results in improved performance. The whole human relations movement led by Mayo (1933) and supported by the Roethlisberger and Dixon (1939) research was

**TABLE 13.1** Summary of motivation theories

Category	Theory	Summary of theory	Implications
Instrumentality	Taylorism Taylor (1911)	If we do one thing it leads to another. People will be motivated to work if rewards and punishments are directly related to their performance.	Basis of crude attempts to motivate people by incentives. Often used as the implied rationale for performance-related pay although this is seldom an effective motivator.
Content or needs	Hierarchy of needs Maslow (1954)	A hierarchy of needs exists: physiological, safety, social, esteem, self-fulfilment. Needs at a higher level only emerge when a lower need is satisfied.	Focuses attention on the various needs that motivate people and the notion that a satisfied need is no longer a motivator. The concept of a hierarchy has no practical significance.
	ERG Alderfer (1972)	A non-hierarchical theory identifying three basic needs: existence, relatedness and growth.	A simpler and more convincing categorization of needs.
	Achievement motivation McClelland (1961)	Identified three needs for managers: achievement, affiliation and power. Of these, achievement is the most important.	Emphasized the importance to managers of achievement as a motivating factor.
	Two-factor model Herzberg (1957, 1966)	Two groups of factors affect job satisfaction: 1) those intrinsic to the work itself; 2) those extrinsic to the job such as pay and working conditions. The factors that affect positive feelings (the motivating factors) are quite different from those that affect negative feelings (the hygiene factors).	The research methodology has been strongly criticized (it does not support the existence of two factors) and the underpinning assumption that everyone has the same needs is invalid. But it has influenced approaches to job design (job enrichment) and it supports the proposition that reward systems should provide for both financial and non-financial rewards.
	Self-determination Deci and Ryan (2000)	Individuals are motivated to achieve three fundamental goals: striving for competence, autonomy, and relatedness.	Provides an alternative and simpler classification of needs.

**TABLE 13.1** Continued

Category	Theory	Summary of theory	Implications
Process	Reinforcement Thorndike (1911) Skinner (1953)	As experience is gained in satisfying needs, people perceive that certain actions help to achieve goals while others are unsuccessful. The successful actions are repeated when a similar need arises.	Provide feedback that positively reinforces effective behaviour.
	Expectancy Vroom (1964) Porter and Lawler (1968)	Effort (motivation) depends on the likelihood that rewards will follow effort and that the reward is worthwhile.	The key theory informing approaches to rewards, ie that they must be a link between effort and reward (line of sight), the reward should be achievable and it should be worthwhile.
	Goal Latham and Locke (1979)	Motivation will improve if people have demanding but agreed goals and receive feedback	Influences performance management and learning and development practices.
	Equity Adams (1966)	People are better motivated if treated equitably, ie treated fairly in comparison with another group of people (a reference group) or a relevant other person.	Need to have equitable reward and employment practices.
	Social learning Bandura (1977)	Recognizes the significance of reinforcement as a determinant of future behaviour but also emphasizes the importance of expectancies about the value of goals and the individual's ability to reach them.	The emphasis is on expectancies, individual goals and values and the influence of both person and situational factors as well as reinforcement.
	Cognitive evaluation Deci and Ryan (1985)	The use of extrinsic rewards may destroy the intrinsic motivation that flows from inherent job interest.	Emphasizes the importance of non-financial rewards. The conclusions reached from Deci and Ryan's research have been questioned.

based on the belief that productivity could be increased by making workers more satisfied, primarily through pleasant and supportive supervision and by meeting their social needs. But research by Katz *et al* (1950) and Katz *et al* (1951) found that the levels of satisfaction with pay, job status or fellow workers in high productivity units were no different to those in low productivity units.

Meta-analysis by Brayfield and Crockett (1955) of a number of studies concluded that there was little evidence of any simple or appreciable relationship between satisfaction and performance. A later review of research by Vroom (1964) found that the median correlation between job satisfaction and job performance for all these studies was only 0.14, which is not high enough to suggest any marked relationship between them. Spector (1997) came to the same conclusion. Indeed, it can be argued that it is not increases in satisfaction that produce improved performance but improved performance that increases satisfaction. This was confirmed by data on the link between job satisfaction and performance for 177 store managers, analysed by Christen *et al* (2006). It was established that store managers' performance increased their job satisfaction but that job satisfaction had no impact on job performance.

## Motivation and money

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Money, in the form of pay or some other sort of remuneration, is regarded by many people as the most obvious extrinsic reward. Money seems to provide the carrot that most people want.

Doubts were cast on the effectiveness of money by Herzberg (1968), which although unsupported by his research have some degree of face validity. He claimed that while the lack of money can cause dissatisfaction, its provision does not result in lasting satisfaction. There is something in this, especially for people on fixed salaries or rates of pay who do not benefit directly from an incentive scheme. They may feel good when they get an increase; apart from the extra money, it is a highly tangible form of recognition and an effective means of helping people to feel that they are valued. But this feeling of euphoria can rapidly die away. Other causes of dissatisfaction from Herzberg's list of hygiene factors, such as working conditions or the quality of management, can loom larger in some people's minds when they fail to get the satisfaction they need from

the work itself. However, it must be re-emphasized that different people have different needs and wants. Some will be much more motivated by money than others. What cannot be assumed is that money motivates everyone in the same way and to the same extent. Thus it is naive to think that the introduction of a performance-related pay scheme will miraculously transform everyone overnight into well-motivated, high-performing individuals.

Nevertheless, money is a powerful force because it is linked directly or indirectly to the satisfaction of many needs. Money may in itself have no intrinsic meaning, but it acquires significant motivating power because it comes to symbolize so many intangible goals. It acts as a symbol in different ways for different people, and for the same person at different times.

But do financial incentives motivate people? The answer is yes, for those people who are strongly motivated by money and whose expectations are that they will receive a worthwhile financial reward. But less confident employees may not respond to incentives that they do not expect to achieve. It can also be argued that extrinsic rewards may erode intrinsic interest – people who work just for money could find their tasks less pleasurable and may not, therefore, do them so well. What we do know is that a multiplicity of factors is involved in performance improvements and many of those factors are interdependent.

Money can therefore provide positive motivation in the right circumstances not only because people need and want money but also because it serves as a highly tangible means of recognition. But badly designed and managed pay systems can demotivate. Another researcher in this area was Jaques (1961), who emphasized the need for such systems to be perceived as being fair and equitable. In other words, the reward should be clearly related to effort or level of responsibility and people should not receive less money than they deserve compared with their fellow workers. Jaques called this the 'felt-fair' principle.

## Motivation strategies

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Motivation strategies aim to create a working environment and to develop policies and practices that will provide for higher levels of performance from employees. The factors affecting them and the HR contribution are summarized in Table 13.2.

**TABLE 13.2** Factors affecting motivation strategies and the HR contribution

Factors affecting motivation strategies	The HR contribution
<p>The complexity of the process of motivation means that simplistic approaches based on instrumentality or needs theory are unlikely to be successful.</p>	<p>Avoid the trap of developing or supporting strategies that offer prescriptions for motivation based on a simplistic view of the process or fail to recognize individual differences.</p>
<p>People are more likely to be motivated if they work in an environment in which they are valued for what they are and what they do. This means paying attention to the basic need for recognition.</p>	<p>Encourage the development of performance management processes that provide opportunities to agree expectations and to recognize accomplishments.</p>
<p>Extrinsic motivators such as incentive pay can have an immediate and powerful effect, but it will not necessarily last long. The intrinsic motivators, which are concerned with the 'quality of working life' (a phrase and movement that emerged from this concept), are likely to have a deeper and longer-term effect because they are inherent in individuals and the work they do and not imposed from outside in such forms as performance-related pay.</p>	<p>Develop total reward systems that provide opportunities for both financial and non-financial rewards to recognize achievements. Bear in mind, however, that financial rewards systems are not necessarily appropriate and the lessons of expectancy, goal and equity theory need to be taken into account in designing and operating them. Pay particular attention to recognition as a means of motivation. Develop intrinsic motivation by paying attention to job design, ensuring that managers are aware of its importance and their role in designing intrinsically motivating jobs.</p>
<p>Some people will be much more motivated by money than others. It cannot be assumed that money motivates everyone in the same way and to the same extent.</p>	<p>Avoid the introduction of a performance-related pay scheme in the belief that it will miraculously transform everyone overnight into well-motivated, high-performing individuals.</p>
<p>The need for work that provides people with the means to achieve their goals, a reasonable degree of autonomy, and scope for the use of skills and competences.</p>	<p>Advise on processes for the design of jobs that take account of the factors affecting the motivation to work, providing for job enrichment in the shape of variety, decision-making responsibility and as much control as possible in carrying out the work.</p>
<p>The need for the opportunity to grow by developing abilities and careers.</p>	<p>Provide facilities and opportunities for learning through such means as personal development planning processes as well as more formal training. Develop career planning processes.</p>



**TABLE 13.2** Continued

Factors affecting motivation strategies	The HR contribution
<p>The cultural environment of the organization in the shape of its values and norms will influence the impact of any attempts to motivate people by direct or indirect means.</p>	<p>Advise on the development of a culture that supports processes of valuing and rewarding employees.</p>
<p>Motivation will be enhanced by leadership, which sets the direction, encourages and stimulates achievement and provides support to employees in their efforts to reach goals and improve their performance generally.</p>	<p>Devise competency frameworks that focus on leadership qualities and the behaviours expected of managers and team leaders. Ensure that leadership potential is identified through performance management and assessment centres. Conduct leadership development programmes.</p>
<p>Achievement motivation is important for managers and those who aspire to greater responsibility.</p>	<p>Pay attention to job design to ensure that people are given the scope to achieve. Develop talent management processes to provide people with opportunities to achieve and performance management processes to provide them with feedback on how well they are achieving and what they must do to achieve more.</p>

### Key learning points: Motivation

#### The process of motivation

Motivation is goal-directed behaviour. People are motivated when they expect that a course of action is likely to lead to the attainment of a goal and a valued reward – one that satisfies their needs and wants.

#### Types of motivation

The two basic types are intrinsic and extrinsic motivation.

#### Motivation theories

There are a number of motivation theories that, in the main, are complementary to one another. The

most significant theories are those concerned with expectancy, goal setting, equity and cognitive evaluation, which are classified as process or cognitive theories.

#### Motivation strategies

Motivation strategies aim to create a working environment and to develop policies and practices that will provide for higher levels of performance from employees. They include the design of intrinsically motivating jobs and leadership development programmes and the development of total reward systems and performance management processes.



## Questions

- 1 What is motivation?
- 2 What is the difference between extrinsic and intrinsic motivation?
- 3 What is instrumentality?
- 4 What is reinforcement?
- 5 What is content or needs theory?
- 6 How valid is Maslow's concept of the hierarchy of human needs?
- 7 How valid is Herzberg's two-factor theory of motivation?
- 8 What is expectancy theory?
- 9 What is goal theory?
- 10 What is equity theory?
- 11 What is cognitive evaluation theory?
- 12 Which motivation theory provides the best guide on the principles of performance-related pay and why?
- 13 What message for HR policy is provided by the belief that motivation is a highly complex process?
- 14 Why is recognition so important as a means of motivation?
- 15 Why are there limitations in the power of money to motivate?
- 16 Why is intrinsic motivation through the work itself likely to be more effective in the longer term than extrinsic motivation?

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# 14

# Commitment

## KEY CONCEPTS AND TERMS

Commitment	Pluralist
High commitment model	Psychological contract
Mutuality	Unitarist
Organizational engagement	

## LEARNING OUTCOMES

On completing this chapter you should be able to define these key concepts. You should also understand:

- The meaning of organizational commitment
- The importance of commitment
- Commitment and engagement
- Problems with the concept of commitment
- The impact of high commitment
- Factors affecting commitment
- Developing a commitment strategy

## Introduction

Commitment represents the strength of an individual's identification with, and involvement in, an organization. It is a concept that has played an important part in HRM philosophy. As Guest (1987: 503) suggested, HRM policies are designed to 'maximize organizational integration, employee commitment, flexibility and quality of work'. Beer *et al* (1984: 20) identified commitment in their concept of HRM as a key dimension because it 'can result not only in more loyalty and better performance for the organization, but also in self-worth, dignity,

psychological involvement, and identity for the individual'.

## The meaning of organizational commitment

Commitment refers to attachment and loyalty. It is associated with the feelings of individuals about their organization. Mowday (1998) stated that it is characterized by an emotional attachment to one's organization that results from shared values and

interests. The three characteristics of commitment identified by Mowday *et al* (1982) are:

- 1 A strong desire to remain a member of the organization.
- 2 A strong belief in and acceptance of the values and goals of the organization.
- 3 A readiness to exert considerable effort on behalf of the organization.

Appelbaum *et al* (2000: 183) rephrased this definition as: ‘Organizational commitment is a multidimensional construct that reflects a worker’s: identification with the organization (loyalty), attachment to the organization (intention to stay), and willingness to expend effort on the organization’s behalf (discretionary effort).’ An alternative, although closely related definition of commitment emphasizes the importance of behaviour in creating commitment. Three features of behaviour are important in binding individuals to their acts: the visibility of the acts, the extent to which the outcomes are irrevocable, and the degree to which the person undertakes the action voluntarily. Commitment, according to Salancik (1977) can be increased and harnessed to obtain support for organizational ends and interests through such ploys as participation in decisions about actions.

## The importance of commitment

The importance of commitment was highlighted by Walton (1985a). His theme was that improved performance would result if the organization moved away from the traditional control-oriented approach to workforce management, which relies upon establishing order, exercising control and achieving efficiency. He proposed that this approach should be replaced by a commitment strategy that would enable workers ‘to respond best – and most creatively – not when they are tightly controlled by management, placed in narrowly defined jobs, and treated like an unwelcome necessity, but, instead, when they are given broader responsibilities, encouraged to contribute and helped to achieve satisfaction in their work’ (*ibid*: 77). He described the commitment-based approach as follows.

### Source review

Richard Walton on commitment –  
Walton (1985a: 79)

Jobs are designed to be broader than before, to combine planning and implementation, and to include efforts to upgrade operations, not just to maintain them. Individual responsibilities are expected to change as conditions change, and teams, not individuals, often are the organizational units accountable for performance. With management hierarchies relatively flat and differences in status minimized, control and lateral coordination depend on shared goals. And expertise rather than formal position determines influence.

Expressed like this, a commitment strategy sounds idealistic (‘the American dream’ as Guest (1990) put it) but it does not appear to be a crude attempt to manipulate people to accept management’s values and goals, as some have suggested. In fact, Walton did not describe it as being instrumental in this manner. His prescription was for a broad HRM approach to the ways in which people are treated, jobs are designed and organizations are managed. He believed that the aim should be to develop ‘mutuality’, a state that exists when management and employees are interdependent and both benefit from this interdependency. The importance of mutuality and its relationship to commitment was spelt out by Walton (1985b: 64) as follows:

The new HRM model is composed of policies that promote mutuality – mutual goals, mutual influence, mutual respect, mutual rewards, mutual responsibility. The theory is that policies of mutuality will elicit commitment which in turn will yield both better economic performance and greater human development.

But a review by Guest (1991) of the mainly North American literature, reinforced by the limited UK research available, led him to the conclusion that: ‘High organizational commitment is associated

with lower labour turnover and absence, but there is no clear link to performance.’ Swales (2002: 164) confirmed that: ‘Despite the best efforts of researchers... the evidence for a strong positive link between commitment and performance remains patchy.’

It is probably unwise to expect too much from commitment as a means of making a direct and immediate impact on performance. It is not the same as motivation. It is possible to be dissatisfied with a particular feature of a job while retaining a fairly high level of commitment to the organization as a whole. But it is reasonable to believe that strong commitment to work may result in conscientious and self-directed application to do the job, regular attendance, the need for less supervision and a high level of discretionary effort. Commitment to the organization will certainly be related to the intention to stay there.

## Commitment and engagement

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The notion of commitment as described above appears to be very similar if not identical to that of organizational engagement that, as defined in Chapter 15, focuses on attachment to, or identification with, the organization as a whole. Are there any differences?

Some commentators have asserted that commitment is a distinct although closely linked entity. As cited by Buchanan (2004: 19), the US Corporate Executive Board divides engagement into two aspects of commitment: 1) rational commitment, which occurs when a job serves employees’ financial, developmental or professional self-interest; and 2) emotional commitment, which arises when workers value, enjoy and believe in what they do and has four times the power to affect performance as its more pragmatic counterpart. The Corporate Executive Board (2004: 1) indicated that engagement is ‘the extent to which employees commit to someone or something in their organization, how hard they work, and how long they stay as a result of that commitment’. Wellins and Concelman (2005: 1) suggested that ‘to be engaged is to be actively committed’. And Macey and Schneider (2008: 8–9) observed that:

Organizational commitment is an important facet of the state of engagement when it is conceptualized as positive attachment to the larger organizational entity and measured as a willingness to exert energy in support of the organization, to feel pride as an organizational member, and to have personal identification with the organization.

Clearly organizational engagement and commitment are closely associated, and commitment was included by the Institute for Employment Studies in its model (see Chapter 15) as an element of engagement. Appelbaum *et al* (2000: 183) noted that: ‘The willingness to exert extra effort is the aspect of organizational commitment that has been shown to be most closely related to an employee’s job performance.’ Robinson *et al* (2004: 7) suggested that the closest relationship of commitment to engagement was ‘affective commitment, ie the satisfaction people get from their jobs and their colleagues and their willingness to go beyond the call of duty for the sake of the organization’. Salanova *et al* (2005) saw commitment as part of engagement but not equivalent to it.

The analysis of the concept of commitment as undertaken in this chapter is based on a considerable body of work exploring its nature and significance, and therefore helps to illuminate the somewhat elusive notion of engagement as discussed in Chapter 15. But there are problems with commitment, as discussed below.

## Critical evaluation of the concept of commitment

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A number of commentators have raised questions about the concept of commitment. These relate to three main problem areas: 1) the imprecise nature of the term, 2) its unitary frame of reference, and 3) commitment as an inhibitor of flexibility.

### *The imprecise nature of the term*

Guest (1987: 513) raised the question of what commitment really means as follows:

The case for seeking high commitment among employees seems plausible but the burgeoning research on the topic has identified a number of

problems. One of these concerns the definition of the concept. The first issue is – commitment to what? Most writers are interested in commitment to the organization, but others have examined career commitment and job commitment. Once the general concept of commitment is utilized, then union commitment, workgroup commitment and family commitment should also be considered. The possibility of multiple and perhaps competing commitments creates a more complex set of issues.

### **Unitary frame of reference**

The concept of commitment, especially as put forward by Walton (1985a), can be criticized as being simplistic, even misguided, in adopting a unitary frame of reference that assumes that organizations consist of people with shared interests. It has been suggested by people such as Cyert and March (1963), Mangham (1979) and Mintzberg (1983) that an organization is really a coalition of interest groups where political processes are an inevitable part of everyday life.

Legge (1989: 38) also raised this question in her discussion of strong culture as a key requirement of HRM, which she criticized because it implies ‘a shared set of managerially sanctioned values... that assumes an identification of employee and employer interests’. As Coopey and Hartley (1991: 21) put it: ‘Commitment is not an all-or-nothing affair (though many managers might like it to be) but a question of multiple or competing commitments for the individual.’ A pluralist perspective recognizes the legitimacy of different interests and is more realistic.

It could be argued that values concerned with performance, quality, service, equal opportunity and innovation are not necessarily wrong because they are managerial values. But pursuing a value such as innovation could work against the interests of employees by, for example, resulting in redundancies. And flexibility may sound a good idea but, beyond the rhetoric, as Sisson (1994: 5) observed, the reality may mean that management can do what it wants. It would be quite reasonable for any employee encouraged to behave in accordance with a value supported by management to ask, ‘What’s in it for me?’ It can also be argued that the imposition from above of management’s values on employees without their having any part to play in discussing and agreeing them is a form of coercion.

### **Commitment and flexibility**

It was pointed out by Coopey and Hartley (1991: 22) that: ‘The problem for a unitarist notion of organizational commitment is that it fosters a conformist approach which not only fails to reflect organizational reality, but can be narrowing and limiting for the organization.’ They argued that if employees are expected and encouraged to commit themselves tightly to a single set of values and goals they will not be able to cope with the ambiguities and uncertainties that are endemic in organizational life in times of change. Conformity to ‘imposed’ values will inhibit creative problem solving, and high commitment to present courses of action will increase both resistance to change and the stress that invariably occurs when change takes place.

If commitment is related to tightly defined plans, this will become a real problem. To avoid it, the emphasis should be on overall strategic directions. These would be communicated to employees with the proviso that changing circumstances will require their amendment. In the meantime, however, everyone can at least be informed in general terms where the organization is heading and, more specifically, the part they are expected to play in helping the organization to get there and, if they can be involved in the decision-making processes on matters that affect them (including management’s values for performance, quality and customer service), so much the better.

Values need not necessarily be restrictive. They can be defined in ways that allow for freedom of choice within broad guidelines. In fact, the values themselves can refer to such processes as flexibility, innovation and responsiveness to change. Thus, far from inhibiting creative problem solving, they can encourage it. But they will not do so if they are imposed from above. Employees need to have a say in defining the values they are expected to support.

### **Factors affecting commitment**

Kochan and Dyer (1993) indicated that the factors affecting the level of commitment in what they called ‘mutual commitment firms’ were as follows:



- *Strategic level*: supportive business strategies, top management value commitment and effective voice for HR in strategy making and governance.
- *Functional (human resource policy) level*: staffing based on employment stabilization, investment in training and development and contingent compensation that reinforces cooperation, participation and contribution.
- *Workplace level*: selection based on high standards, broad task design and teamwork, employee involvement in problem solving and a climate of cooperation and trust.

The research conducted by Purcell *et al* (2003) identified the following key policy and practice factors that influence levels of commitment:

- received training last year;
- satisfied with career opportunities;
- satisfied with the performance appraisal system;
- think managers are good in people management (leadership);
- find their work challenging;
- think their firm helps them achieve a work–life balance;
- satisfied with communication or company performance.

## Developing a commitment strategy

A commitment strategy can be based on the high-commitment model incorporating policies and practices in areas of HR such as job design, learning and development, career planning, performance management, reward management, participation, communication and employee well-being. HR should play a major part in developing a high-commitment organization. The 10 steps it can take are:

- 1 Advise on methods of communicating the values and aims of management and the achievements of the organization so that employees are more likely to identify with the organization as one they are proud to work for.

- 2 Emphasize to management that commitment is a two-way process; employees cannot be expected to be committed to the organization unless management demonstrates that it is committed to them and recognizes their contribution as stakeholders.
- 3 Impress on management the need to develop a climate of trust by being honest with people, treating them fairly, justly and consistently, keeping its word, and showing willingness to listen to the comments and suggestions made by employees during processes of consultation and participation.
- 4 Develop a positive psychological contract (the set of reciprocal but unwritten expectations that exist between individual employees and their employers) by treating people as stakeholders, relying on consensus and cooperation rather than control and coercion, and focusing on the provision of opportunities for learning, development and career progression.
- 5 Advise on the establishment of partnership agreements with trade unions that emphasize unity of purpose, common approaches to working together and the importance of giving employees a voice in matters that concern them.
- 6 Recommend and take part in the achievement of single status for all employees (often included in a partnership agreement) so that there is no longer an ‘us and them’ culture.
- 7 Encourage management to declare a policy of employment security and ensure that steps are taken to avoid involuntary redundancies.
- 8 Develop performance management processes that provide for the alignment of organizational and individual objectives.
- 9 Advise on means of increasing employee identification with the company through rewards related to organizational performance (profit sharing or gainsharing) or employee share ownership schemes.
- 10 Enhance employee job engagement, ie identification of employees with the job they are doing, through job design processes that aim to create higher levels of job satisfaction (job enrichment).

## Key learning points: Commitment

### The meaning of commitment

Commitment refers to attachment and loyalty. It is associated with the feelings of individuals about their organization. The three characteristics of commitment identified by Mowday *et al* (1982) are:

- 1 A strong desire to remain a member of the organization.
- 2 A strong belief in and acceptance of the values and goals of the organization.
- 3 A readiness to exert considerable effort on behalf of the organization.

### The impact of high commitment

In his seminal *Harvard Business Review* article, Richard Walton (1985a) stated that 'eliciting employee commitment will lead to enhanced performance [and] the evidence shows this belief to be well founded'. The importance of commitment was highlighted by Walton. His theme was that improved performance would result if the organization moved away from the traditional control-oriented approach to workforce management, which relies upon establishing order, exercising control and achieving efficiency. He proposed that this approach should be replaced by a commitment strategy.

### Problems with the concept of commitment

There are four main problem areas: 1) the imprecise nature of the term, 2) its unitary frame of reference, 3) commitment as an inhibitor of flexibility, and 4) the extent to which high commitment does in practice result in improved organizational performance.

### Engagement and commitment

Organizational engagement and commitment are closely associated. Commitment was included by the IES in its model as an element of engagement. But commitment is a somewhat wider concept in that it is concerned with both job engagement and organizational engagement.

### The factors affecting the level of commitment (Kochan and Dyer, 1993)

- *Strategic level*: supportive business strategies, top management value commitment and effective voice for HR in strategy making and governance.
- *Functional (human resource policy) level*: staffing based on employment stabilization, investment in training and development and contingent compensation that reinforces cooperation, participation and contribution.
- *Workplace level*: selection based on high standards, broad task design and teamwork, employee involvement in problem solving and a climate of cooperation and trust.

### HR's role in enhancing commitment

HR should play a major part in developing a high-commitment organization. The 10 steps it can take are:

- Advise on methods of communicating the values and aims of management.
- Emphasize to management that commitment is a two-way process.
- Impress on management the need to develop a climate of trust.
- Develop a positive psychological contract.
- Advise on the establishment of partnership agreements with trade unions.
- Recommend and take part in the achievement of single status for all employees.
- Encourage management to declare a policy of employment security.
- Develop performance management processes.
- Advise on means of increasing employee identification with the company.
- Enhance employee job engagement through job design processes.



## Questions

- 1 What is commitment?
- 2 What is mutuality?
- 3 What are the three characteristics of commitment?
- 4 Why is commitment important?
- 5 What impact can high levels of commitment have on performance?
- 6 What is the relationship between commitment and engagement?
- 7 What did the research conducted by Purcell *et al* (2003) tell us about the factors affecting commitment?
- 8 Is a belief in the virtues of commitment based on an unrealistic unitary view of employment relationships?
- 9 Do high levels of commitment result in lack of flexibility and, if so, what can be done about it?
- 10 What are the essential features of a commitment strategy?

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# 15

## Employee engagement

### KEY CONCEPTS AND TERMS

Commitment	Leader-member exchange
Discretionary behaviour	Motivation
Engagement	Organizational citizenship behaviour
Extrinsic motivation	Organizational engagement
Intrinsic motivation	Social exchange theory
Job engagement	

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

On completing this chapter you should be able to define these key concepts. You should also understand:

- The meaning of employee engagement
- Job engagement
- Organizational engagement
- The theory of engagement
- The components of engagement
- The drivers of engagement
- Outcomes of engagement
- Enhancing engagement
- The significance of burnout

### Introduction

Engagement takes place when people are committed to their work and the organization and are motivated to achieve high levels of performance. According to the CIPD (2012: 13): ‘Engagement has become for practitioners an umbrella concept for capturing the various means by which employers can elicit

additional or discretionary effort from employees – a willingness on the part of staff to work beyond contract. It has become a new management mantra.’ As David Guest (2013: 231) remarked: ‘One of the attractions of engagement is that it is clearly a good thing. Managers are attracted to the concept because they like the idea of having engaged employees and dislike the prospect of having disengaged employees’.

According to Truss *et al* (2013: 1): ‘The notion that individuals can be “personally” engaged in their work, investing positive emotional and cognitive energy into their role performance, was first proposed by William Kahn (1990) in his seminal article in the *Academy of Management Journal*’. Schaufeli (2013: 15) commented: ‘It is not entirely clear when the term “engagement” was first used in relation to work, but generally the Gallup Organization is credited with coining the term, sometime during the 1990s’.

Reilly and Brown (2008) noted that the terms ‘job satisfaction’, ‘motivation’ and ‘commitment’ are generally being replaced now in business by ‘engagement’ because it appears to have more descriptive force and face validity. Truss *et al* (2013: 2657) suggested that ‘engagement may constitute the mechanism through which HRM practitioners impact individual and organizational performance’.

This chapter starts with an analysis of the meaning of employee engagement and continues with an assessment of the components, drivers and outcomes. This is followed by a discussion of what Macey *et al* describe as burnout, the possibility of which should be taken into account in pursuing the engagement strategies described at the end of the chapter.

## The meaning of employee engagement

Kahn (1990: 894) defined employee engagement as ‘the harnessing of organization members’ selves to their work roles; in engagement, people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performances’. There have been dozens of definitions since the explosion of interest in the concept during the 2000s. Harter *et al* (2002: 269) stated that engagement was ‘the individual’s involvement and satisfaction with as well as enthusiasm for work. A later definition was produced by Macey *et al* (2009: 7) who defined engagement as ‘an individual’s purpose and focused energy, evident to others in the display of personal initiative, adaptability, effort and persistence directed towards organizational goals’.

Alfes *et al* (2010: 5) saw engagement as having three core facets:

- 1 *intellectual engagement* – thinking hard about the job and how to do it better;
- 2 *affective engagement* – feeling positively about doing a good job;
- 3 *social engagement* – actively taking opportunities to discuss work-related improvements with others at work.

## Job or organizational engagement or both

The term ‘engagement’ can be used in a specific job-related way to describe what takes place when people are interested in and positive – even excited – about their jobs, exercise discretionary behaviour and are motivated to achieve high levels of performance. It is described as job or work engagement. Truss *et al* (2006: ix) stated that: ‘Put simply, engagement means feeling positive about your job.’ They went on to explain that: ‘The engaged employee is the passionate employee, the employee who is totally immersed in his or her work, energetic, committed and completely dedicated’ (ibid: 1).

Organizational engagement focuses on attachment to or identification with the organization as a whole. The Conference Board (2006) defined employee engagement as the heightened connection that employees feel for their organization. Robinson *et al* (2004: 9) emphasized the organizational aspect of engagement when they referred to it as ‘a positive attitude held by the employee towards the organization and its values’. This definition of organizational engagement resembles the traditional notion of commitment.

Perhaps the most illuminating and helpful approach to the definition of engagement is to recognize that it involves both job and organizational engagement as suggested by Saks (2006) and Balain and Sparrow (2009).

## The theory of engagement

Saks (2006: 603) thought that a strong theoretical rationale for engagement was provided by social exchange theory. As he described it:

Social exchange theory argues that obligations are generated through a series of interactions between

parties who are in a state of reciprocal interdependence. A basic tenet of social exchange theory is that relationships evolve over time into trusting, loyal and mutual commitments as long as the parties abide by certain 'rules' of exchange... [These] usually involve reciprocity or repayment rules such that the actions of one party lead to a response or actions by the other party.

He argued that one way for individuals to repay their organization is through their level of engagement. In other words, employees will choose to engage themselves to varying degrees and in response to the resources they receive from their organization. This is consistent with the description of engagement by Robinson *et al* (2004) as a two-way relationship between the employer and the employee. Balain and Sparrow (2009: 16) concluded that:

To understand what really causes engagement, and what it causes in turn, we need to embed the idea in a well-founded theory. The one that is considered most appropriate is social exchange theory, which sees feelings of loyalty, commitment and discretionary effort as all being forms of social reciprocation by employees to a good employer.

As discussed below, the concept of engagement can be further explored in terms of its make-up (its components), its antecedents (the forces that drive it), and its outcomes.

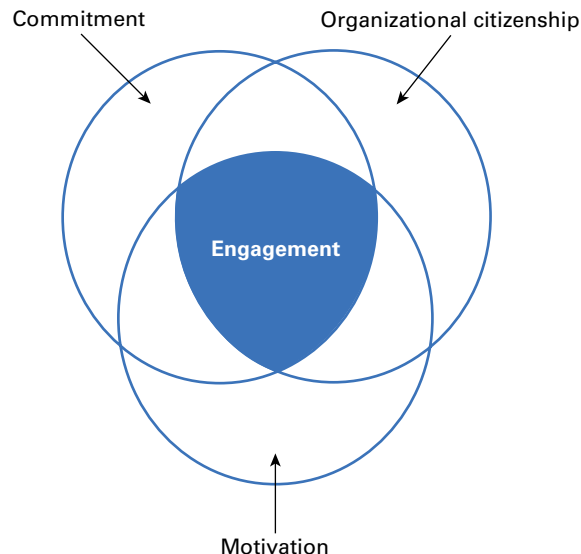
## The components of employee engagement

Engagement can be regarded as having three overlapping components: motivation and commitment as defined in Chapters 13 and 14 and organizational citizenship behaviour (OCB) as defined below. A model of engagement containing these components produced by the Institute for Employment Studies (Armstrong *et al*, 2010) is shown in Figure 15.1. Work or job engagement is also associated with job satisfaction. These components of engagement are considered below.

### Engagement and commitment

The concepts of commitment and organizational engagement are closely related, although Robinson *et al* (2004) stated that while engagement contains many of the elements of commitment it is not a perfect match. They suggested that it does not reflect sufficiently two aspects of engagement – its two-way nature, and the extent to which engaged employees are expected to have positive attitudes about their job. However, Storey (2007: 8) referred to the concept of employee engagement as 'a term that broadly equates with the notion of high commitment'.

**FIGURE 15.1** IES model of employee engagement



**SOURCE:** Armstrong *et al* (2000)

Yalabik *et al* (2013: 2803) proposed that ‘affective commitment’ (ie an emotional attachment to, identification with and involvement with the organization) is an antecedent of work engagement.

## Engagement and motivation

The motivation element in engagement is intrinsic. Macey *et al* (2009: 67) commented that: ‘When the work itself is meaningful it is also said to have intrinsic motivation. This means that it is not the pay or recognition that yields positive feelings of engagement but the work itself.’ They also pointed out that engaged employees ‘feel that their jobs are an important part of what they are’ (ibid: 127).

## Engagement and organizational citizenship behaviour

Organizational citizenship behaviour (OCB), as originally defined by Organ (1988), is employee behaviour that goes above and beyond the call of duty and contributes to organizational effectiveness. It is discretionary and not explicitly recognized by the employing organization’s formal reward system.

As Little and Little (2006) observed, OCB is an outcome of the attitudes of job satisfaction and organizational commitment. It is similar to the definitions in the engagement literature of being respectful of and helpful to colleagues and willingness to go the extra mile or work longer hours, try harder, accomplish more and speak positively about the organization. They noted that this desirable behaviour has been shown to be related more to the work situation than to individual dispositions.

## Engagement and job satisfaction

Job satisfaction was defined by Locke (1976: 1304) as ‘a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one’s job and job experiences’. Engaged employees are more likely than not to be satisfied with their jobs.

Job satisfaction, like commitment, is regarded by Yalabik *et al* (2013: 2805) as an antecedent of work engagement. It has been shown to be related to other attitudes and behaviours. Positively, it is related to organizational commitment, job involvement,

organizational citizenship behaviours and mental health. Negatively, it is related to turnover and stress.

## Drivers of employee engagement

To be able to do anything about engagement it is necessary to understand the factors that affect this – its antecedents and drivers. Crawford *et al* (2013: 59–62) listed the following drivers:

- *Job challenge* – this takes place when the scope of jobs is broad, job responsibility is high and there is a high work load. It enhances engagement because it creates potential for accomplishment and personal growth.
- *Autonomy* – the freedom, independence and discretion allowed to employees in scheduling their work and determining the procedures for carrying it out. It provides a sense of ownership and control over work outcomes.
- *Variety* – jobs which allow individuals to perform many different activities or use many different skills.
- *Feedback* – providing employees with direct and clear information about the effectiveness of their performance.
- *Fit* – the existence of compatibility between an individual and a work environment (eg, job, organization, manager, co-workers) which allows individuals to behave in a manner consistent with how they see or want to see themselves.
- *Opportunities for development* – these make work meaningful because they provide pathways for employee growth and fulfilment.
- *Rewards and recognition* – these represent both direct and indirect returns on the personal investment of one’s time in acting out a work role.

In addition, the quality of leadership exercised by line managers is an important driver Hakanen *et al* (2006) established through their research

that supervisory support is positively related to employee engagement as is involvement in decision-making and day-to-day control over tasks and schedules. Macey and Schneider (2008) argued that when leaders have clear expectations, are fair, and recognize good performance they will have positive effects on employee engagement by engendering a sense of attachment to the job. Research by MacLeod and Clarke (2009) confirmed that line managers played a key part in promoting engagement by providing clarity of purpose, appreciating employees' effort and contribution, treating their people as individuals and ensuring that work is organized efficiently and effectively so that employees feel they are valued, and equipped and supported to do their job.

Macey *et al* (2009: 11) emphasized the work environment and the jobs people do. They noted that: 'Engagement requires a work environment that does not just demand more but promotes information sharing, provides learning opportunities and fosters a balance in people's lives, thereby creating the bases for sustained energy and personal initiative.'

## Outcomes of engagement

Stairs and Galpin (2010) claimed that high levels of engagement have been shown to relate to:

- lower absenteeism and higher employee retention;
- increased employee effort and productivity;
- improved quality and reduced error rates;
- increased sales;
- higher profitability, earnings per share and shareholder returns;
- enhanced customer satisfaction and loyalty;
- faster business growth; and
- higher likelihood of business success.

Alfes *et al* (2010: 2) asserted that engaged employees perform better, are more innovative than others, are more likely to want to stay with their employers, enjoy greater levels of personal well-being and perceive their workload to be more sustainable than others.

However, Sparrow (2013: 102) warned against over-confident claims that high engagement results

in high performance. He suggested that it is possible that being in a well-performing unit makes employees engaged, not the other way round a possible. In other words 'reverse causation' (A situation where A might have caused B but it is just as likely that B caused, A).

## Enhancing employee engagement

Research conducted by Towers Perrin (2003) showed that enhancing engagement is a process that never ends and it rests on the foundation of a meaningful and emotionally enriching work experience. Furthermore, it is not about making people happy, or paying them more money. Important as pay and benefits are in attracting and retaining people, it was found they play a less significant role in engaging people in their work. The elements found to be fundamental for engagement were strong leadership, accountability, autonomy, a sense of control over one's environment and opportunities for development.

Jenkins and Delbridge (2013) proposed that in line with Storey's (1989) contrast between 'hard' and 'soft' HRM it was possible to distinguish between hard and soft management approaches to enhancing engagement. In their case studies of two companies, one adopted a soft approach that centred on work design and promoting positive workplace conditions and relationships between management and employees. Enhanced employee engagement was seen as a positive outcome – productivity was not the primary goal. In the other case, a 'hard' approach concentrated on directly increasing employee effort to improve organizational performance. In the company using a soft approach high levels of engagement were reported, while in the other company high levels of employee disengagement were evident.

To enhance employee engagement employers have to address issues concerning both aspects of engagement – job and organizational engagement. These are interrelated and any actions taken to enhance either aspect will be mutually supporting. However, it is useful to consider what can be done specifically in each area, bearing in mind the particular circumstances and needs of the organization.



## Enhancing job engagement

Line managers play a key role in enhancing job engagement with the support of organizational initiatives in the areas of job design, learning programmes, including leadership development for line managers, and performance and reward management systems.

### Line managers

According to the Gallup Organization research reported by Coffman and Gonzalez-Molina (2002: 130), to enhance engagement managers should:

- make employees aware of their individual strengths;
- provide continuous feedback on how those strengths are being used;
- ‘clear the path’ so that employees can do what they do best without unnecessary distractions;
- build trust by showing commitment to the employee’s success;
- challenge people within areas of their distinctive strengths;
- focus upon particular skills and knowledge in order to build talent into strength;
- give employees ownership and creation of their outcomes.

Extensive research by Lewis *et al* (2012) for the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development resulted in the production of the competency framework for employee engagement management set out in Table 15.1.

### Job design

Job design is an important factor in enhancing engagement. Macey *et al* (2009: 69) commented that: ‘People come to work for pay but get engaged at work because the work they do is meaningful.’ Intrinsic motivation and therefore increased engagement can be generated by the work itself if it provides interest and opportunities for achievement and self-fulfilment. Robertson and Smith (1985) suggested

that the aim should be to influence: 1) skill variety, 2) task identity, 3) task significance, 4) autonomy, and 5) feedback.

### Learning and development programmes

Learning and development programmes can ensure that people have the opportunity and are given the encouragement to learn and grow in their roles. This includes the use of policies that focus on role flexibility – giving people the chance to develop their roles by making better and extended use of their talents. It also means going beyond talent management for the favoured few and developing the abilities of the core people on whom the organization depends.

The strategy should also cover career development opportunities and how individuals can be given the guidance, support and encouragement they need if they are to fulfil their potential and achieve a successful career with the organization in tune with their talents and aspirations. The actions required to provide men and women of promise with a sequence of learning activities and experiences that will equip them for whatever level of responsibility they have the ability to reach should be included in the strategy.

### Developing engagement through performance management

Performance management processes as described in Chapter 25 can be used to define individual goals and responsibilities, offer feedback on performance and provide the basis for developing skills and planning career development. Although the organization can create a performance management system, its effectiveness will depend on the interest and competence of line managers.

### Developing engagement through reward

Reilly and Brown (2008) asserted that appropriate reward practices and processes, both financial and non-financial and managed in combination (ie a



**TABLE 15.1** Employee engagement management competency framework

Competency	Description
Autonomy and empowerment	Trusts and involves employees
Development	Helps to develop employees' careers
Feedback, praise and recognition	Gives positive feedback and praise and rewards good work
Individual interest	Shows concern for employees
Availability	There when needed
Personal manner	Positive approach, leads by example
Ethics	Treats employees fairly
Reviewing and guiding	Helps and advises employees
Clarifying expectations	Sets clear goals and defines what is expected
Managing time and resources	Ensures resources are available to meet workload
Following processes and procedures	Understands and explains processes and procedures

**SOURCE:** Adapted from Lewis *et al* (2012: 9)

total rewards approach), can help to build and improve employee engagement, and that badly designed or executed rewards can hinder it. Their model, based on research of how reward policies influence performance through engagement, is shown in Figure 15.2.

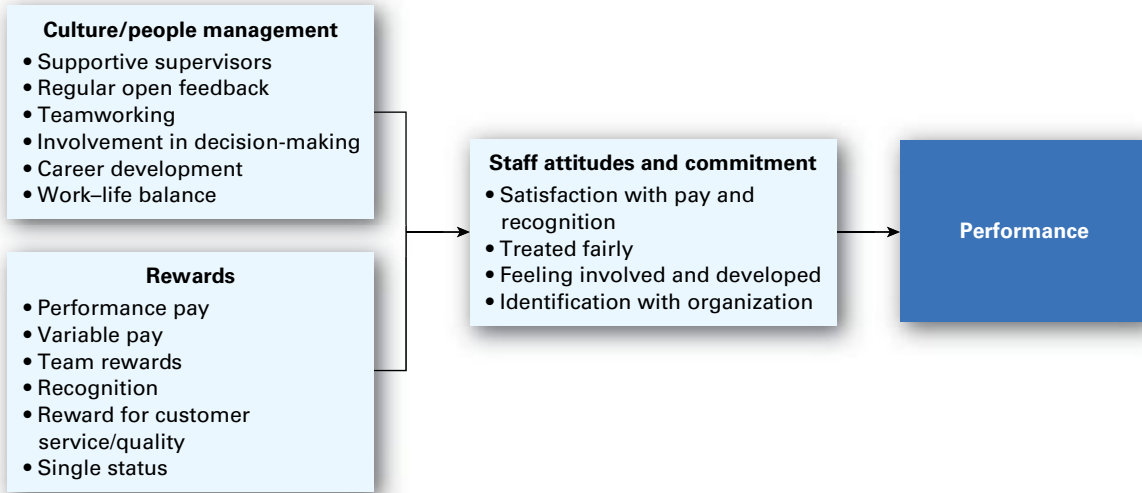
## Enhancing organizational engagement

The approaches that can be used to enhance organizational engagement consist of: 1) high-involvement management; (2) providing more scope for employee voice; (3) developing 'the big idea'; and 4) tackling the work environment.

### *High-involvement management*

Organizational engagement can be developed through high-involvement management – a term first used by Lawler (1986) to describe management systems based on commitment and involvement, as opposed to the old bureaucratic model based on control. The underlying hypothesis is that employees will increase their involvement with the company if they are given the opportunity to manage and understand their work. Lawler claimed that high-involvement practices worked well because they acted as a synergy and had a multiplicative effect.

High-involvement management means treating employees as partners in the enterprise, whose interests are respected. It also means providing employees with a voice, as discussed below.

**FIGURE 15.2** How reward policies influence performance through engagement

SOURCE: Reilly and Brown (2008)

## Employee voice

Employee voice policies enable employees to effectively communicate their concerns to management. Rees *et al* (2013: 2781) suggested that there is a direct relationship between the effectiveness of such policies and levels of employee engagement. They invoked social exchange theory, which states that employees engage in reciprocal relationships that can develop into trusting, loyal and mutual commitments when certain 'rules of exchange' are observed. Employees will demonstrate positive attitudes and behaviours when they perceive that their employer values them and their contribution. They will demonstrate higher levels of performance if the work environment is one in which employees have a voice in the sense that they can share their concerns, opinions and ideas with their employers.

## The 'big idea'

A basis for building organizational engagement was established by the longitudinal research in 12 companies conducted by Professor John Purcell and his colleagues (Purcell *et al*, 2003: 13). They found that the most successful companies had 'the big idea'. This was 'a clear sense of mission underpinned by

values and a culture expressing what a firm is and its relationship with its customers and employees'.

## The work environment

Increasing organizational engagement through the work environment means developing a culture that encourages positive attitudes to work, promoting interest and excitement in the jobs people do, reducing stress and recognizing the importance of social interaction. For example, Lands' End, the clothing company, believes that staff who are enjoying themselves, who are being supported and developed and who feel fulfilled and respected at work, will provide the best service to customers.

It was suggested by Guest (2009) that engagement can be achieved through effective leadership of a strong, positive culture that ensures the enactment of organizational values; through strong management that supports employees' work and well-being; through careful design of systems and jobs to enable employees to contribute through full use of their knowledge and skills; through effective employee voice; and through provision of appropriate resources, tools and information to perform effectively.

## Burnout

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There is a negative side to engagement – burnout, defined by Maslach and Jackson (1981: 99) as ‘a syndrome of emotional exhaustion and cynicism’. Burnout can take place when individuals are placed under too much pressure to perform. It is sometimes called disengagement. Workaholics who put themselves under too much pressure can suffer burnout.

Burnout is a response to high stress caused by excessive job demands, which include attempting to meet challenging, relentless and unreachable standards. It is more likely to happen when workers have no control over their work environment. Burnout can result in failure, absenteeism or leaving the organization.

To avoid the pursuit of engagement resulting in disengagement and burnout, managements need to ensure that employees are not put under too much pressure, are provided with support when required and are recognized for what they can achieve with the resources they have available (including their own skills and ability to exert effort). Alfes *et al* (2010) concluded that a responsible approach to engagement requires a work environment that does not just demand more but fosters a balance in people’s lives.

## Measuring engagement

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Engagement surveys provide the basis for the development and implementation of engagement strategies. A review by Vance (2006) of a number of such surveys identified the following common themes:

- pride in employer;
- satisfaction with employer;
- job satisfaction;
- opportunity to perform well at challenging work;
- recognition and positive feedback for one’s contributions;
- personal support from one’s supervisor;
- effort above and beyond the minimum;

- understanding the link between one’s job and the organization’s mission;
- prospects for future growth with one’s employer;
- intention to stay with one’s employer.

The important thing to do with an engagement survey (an example of which is given in Chapter 64), as with any form of attitude survey, is to ensure that proper use is made of it through the ‘triple-A’ approach: Analysis, Assessment and Action. It is also important to inform employees of the results of the survey in full and involve them in assessing the results and agreeing actions.

## Conclusions

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Keenoy (2013: 198) referred to the message delivered by employee engagement prescriptions as ‘motherhood and apple pie’ and suggested that the term engagement could be replaced by job involvement, empowerment, high performance management or ‘any of the other putative solutions’ to the problem of getting employees to be more productive. He argued that ‘there are powerful generic echoes of McGregor’s (1960) Theory Y’ – the view that people are creative beings who under proper conditions will not only accept but also seek responsibility.

David Guest (2013: 233) warned that: ‘The risk must be that it [employee engagement] will soon join the pantheon of laudable aspirations with which we can all agree, including happiness, quality, growth and sustainability; goals that most of us would like to pursue, concepts that some people think we can measure, but goals that will remain ultimately elusive in many if not most cases’.

However, John Purcell (2013: 247) contended that: ‘Employee engagement is worth pursuing, not as an end in itself, but as a means of improving working lives and company performance’. And the CIPD (2012: 1) noted that:

Engagement is not about driving employees to work harder but about providing the conditions in which they will work more effectively – it is about releasing employees’ discretionary behaviour.

## CASE STUDY Land Registry – modernizing the public sector

Land Registry is a government executive agency employing 300 people. Engaging and enthusing its staff has been a challenge. The Swansea site was an underperforming office within an otherwise successful organization. Today it is one of the most productive Land Registry offices as a result of a planned high-engagement working change process.

The change process focused on the engagement of individuals at all levels. An internal project board masterminded a series of staff surveys and conferences. Senior management team away-days and line management training and coaching to improve performance management and the development of soft skills were all resourced in-house. Training initially focused on senior management team development, so they could understand and lead the changes, building middle management skills so that they could lead change and create an atmosphere in which employees could have confidence in an open appraisal process, and team building and development. Service to customers was always at the centre of the process. Personal development plans, based on Land Registry's

national core competency framework, provided the opportunity to discuss knowledge, skills and 'most importantly' attitudes. The framework bands nine competencies in five main performance areas:

- *Delivering results*: planning and organizing the workload; and dealing effectively with/managing change.
- *Effective teamwork*: contributing to the team's performance; and building and leading a team.
- *Knowledge and experience*: acquiring and applying technical/specialist knowledge.
- *Providing a quality service*: meeting customers' needs; and anticipating problems and achieving solutions.
- *Personal effectiveness*: communicating effectively; and showing initiative and determination.

Each of these competencies can be demonstrated at four levels, from entry to senior management level.

### Key learning points: Employee engagement

#### The meaning of employee engagement

Engagement happens when people are committed to their work and the organization and are motivated to achieve high levels of performance. It has two interrelated aspects: 1) job engagement, which takes place when employees exercise discretionary effort because they find their jobs interesting, challenging and rewarding; and 2) organizational engagement, when they identify with the values and purpose of their organization and believe that it is a great place in which to work and to continue to work.

#### Components of engagement

The components of engagement are commitment, organizational citizenship behaviour, motivation and job satisfaction.

#### Theory of engagement

Engagement will have behavioural outcomes leading to what can be described as an 'engaged employee'. A strong theoretical rationale for engagement is provided by social exchange theory.

#### Drivers of engagement

Macey *et al* (2009) emphasize the importance of the work environment and the jobs people do. Alfes *et al* (2010) established that the main drivers of engagement are meaningful work (the most important), senior management vision and communication, positive perceptions of one's line manager and employee voice – employees having a say in matters that concern them.

### Enhancing engagement

Line managers play a key role in enhancing job engagement with the support of organizational initiatives in the areas of job design; learning programmes, including leadership development for line managers; and performance and reward management systems.

The approaches that can be used to enhance organizational engagement include: 1) high-involvement management; (2) developing 'the big idea'; and (3) tackling the work environment.

### Burnout

Burnout can take place when individuals are placed under too much pressure to perform. It is sometimes called disengagement.

### Measuring engagement

Engagement surveys provide the basis for the development and implementation of engagement strategies.

## Questions

- 1 What is employee engagement?
- 2 What is job engagement?
- 3 What is organizational engagement?
- 4 What are the components of engagement?
- 5 What is organizational citizenship behaviour?
- 6 What is the relationship between engagement and commitment?
- 7 What is the relationship between engagement and motivation?
- 8 What is the relationship between engagement and organizational citizenship behaviour?
- 9 What are the main outcomes of engagement (name at least four)?
- 10 What are the main conclusions about engagement reached by the research conducted by Saks (2006)?
- 11 What are the main conclusions about engagement reached by the research conducted by Balain and Sparrow (2009)?
- 12 What are the main conclusions about engagement reached by the research conducted by MacLeod and Clarke (2009)?
- 13 What are the main conclusions about engagement reached by the research conducted by Alfes *et al* (2010)?
- 14 What is social exchange theory?
- 15 What is discretionary behaviour?
- 16 What are the main drivers of engagement as listed by MacLeod and Clarke (name at least three)?
- 17 How can job engagement be enhanced?
- 18 What is the role of job design in job engagement?
- 19 How can organizational engagement be enhanced?
- 20 What is high-involvement management?

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# PART IV

## People resourcing

### PART IV CONTENTS

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- 16 Strategic resourcing
- 17 Workforce planning
- 18 Recruitment and selection
- 19 Resourcing practice
- 20 Talent management

### Introduction

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People resourcing, often called ‘employee resourcing’ or simply ‘resourcing’, is the term used to cover employment activities that ensure the organization has the people it needs, and deals with employee issues such as turnover and absenteeism issues. The employment activities comprise workforce planning, recruitment and selection, attracting and retaining people, managing employee turnover, absence management and talent management. People resourcing is associated with learning and development programmes that provide for the organization to have the skills and talented people it requires.

Resourcing is a vital organizational activity that recognizes that the strategic capability of a firm depends on its resource capability in the shape of people (the resource-based view). This is the strategic approach to resourcing, as explained in Chapter 16. From this emerges the workforce planning aspect of resourcing covered in Chapter 17, which deals with what sort of workforce the organization requires

now and in the future and what steps should be taken to meet those requirements.

The core resourcing activities of recruitment and selection and handling employment issues discussed in the next two chapters are transactional. There are some who are rather dismissive about them, implying that HR is primarily a transformational activity and that recruitment, while necessary, is best left to the sidelined inhabitants of shared service centres so that business partners can get on with what really matters. They could not be more wrong. If HR does not deliver the transactional services expected of it, then no amount of strategizing will save the function from being dismissed as a luxury.

However, talent management as described in Chapter 20 contains both transformational and transactional elements. It recognizes that businesses with the best people win and that the way to transform the organization is to identify and develop those with talent, but it also involves transactional activities such as recruitment and the administration of learning and development events.

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# 16

## Strategic resourcing

### KEY CONCEPTS AND TERMS

Employee value proposition  
 Employer brand  
 Employer of choice  
 Psychological contract  
 Talent management  
 Workforce planning

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

On completing this chapter you should be able to define these key concepts. You should also know about:

- The meaning of strategic resourcing
- The objective of strategic resourcing
- The strategic HRM approach to resourcing
- Strategic fit in resourcing
- Integrating business and resourcing strategies
- The components of resourcing strategy

### Introduction

Strategic resourcing is a key part of strategic human resource management, ie matching human resources to the strategic and operational requirements of the organization and ensuring the full utilization of those resources. It is concerned not only with obtaining and keeping the number and quality of staff required but also with selecting and promoting people who 'fit' the culture and the strategic requirements of the organization.

### The objective of strategic resourcing

Strategic resourcing aims to ensure that the organization has the people it needs to achieve its business goals. Like strategic HRM, strategic resourcing is essentially about the integration of business and employee resourcing strategies so that the latter contribute to the achievement of the former.

The concept that the strategic capability of a firm depends on its resource capability in the shape of people (the resource-based view) provides the rationale for strategic resourcing. The objective is therefore to ensure that a firm achieves competitive advantage by recruiting, retaining and developing more capable people than its rivals. The organization attracts such people by being ‘the employer of choice’. It retains them by providing better opportunities, rewards and conditions of employment than others and by developing a positive psychological contract (the set of reciprocal but unwritten expectations that exist between individual employees and their employers), which increases engagement and commitment and creates mutual trust. Furthermore, the organization deploys its people in ways that maximize the added value they supply and develops their talents and skills.

## The strategic HRM approach to resourcing

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The philosophy behind the strategic approach to resourcing is that it is people who implement the strategic plan. As Quinn Mills (1983) put it, the process is one of ‘planning with people in mind’.

The integration of business and resourcing strategies is based on an understanding of the direction in which the organization is going and the determination of:

- the numbers of people required to meet business needs;
- the skills and behaviour required to support the achievement of business strategies;
- the impact of organizational restructuring as a result of rationalization, decentralization, delayering, acquisitions, mergers, product or market development, or the introduction of new technology – for example, cellular manufacturing;
- plans for changing the culture of the organization in such areas as ability to deliver, performance standards, quality, customer service, teamworking and flexibility, which indicate the need for people with different attitudes, beliefs and personal characteristics.

These factors will be strongly influenced by the type of business strategies adopted by the organization and the sort of business it is in. These may be expressed in such terms as Miles and Snow’s (1978) typology of defender, prospector and analyser organizations.

Strategic HRM places more emphasis than traditional personnel management on finding people whose attitudes and behaviour are likely to fit what management believes to be appropriate and conducive to success. Townley (1989) commented that organizations are concentrating more on the attitudinal and behavioural characteristics of employees. This tendency has its dangers. Innovative and adaptive organizations need non-conformists, even mavericks, who can ‘buck the system’. If managers recruit people ‘in their own image’ there is the risk of staffing the organization with conformist clones and of perpetuating a dysfunctional culture – one that may have been successful in the past but is no longer appropriate in the face of new challenges.

The resourcing strategies that emerge from the process of strategic resourcing exist to provide the people and skills required to support the business strategy, but they should also contribute to the formulation of that strategy. HR directors have an obligation to point out to their colleagues the human resource opportunities and constraints that will affect the achievement of strategic plans. In mergers or acquisitions, for example, the ability of management within the company to handle the new situation and the quality of management in the new business will be important considerations.

## Strategic fit in resourcing

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Strategic resourcing places more emphasis than traditional personnel management on finding people whose attitudes and behaviour are likely to fit what management believes to be appropriate and conducive to success. As mentioned above, Townley (1989) felt that organizations are concentrating more on the attitudinal and behavioural characteristics of employees, a tendency that has its dangers.

## Bundling resourcing strategies and activities

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Employee resourcing is not just about recruitment and selection. It is concerned with any means available to meet the firm's need for certain skills and behaviours. A strategy to ensure the organization has the talented people it needs (a talent management strategy) may start with recruitment and selection but would extend into learning and development to enhance abilities and skills and modify behaviours and succession planning. Performance management processes can be used to identify development needs (skills and behaviours) and motivate people to make the most effective use of their abilities. Competency frameworks and profiles can be prepared to define the skills and behaviours required and can be used in selection, employee development and employee reward processes. The aim should be to develop a reinforcing bundle of strategies along these lines.

## The components of strategic employee resourcing

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The overarching component of strategic resourcing is the integration of resourcing and business plans. Within this framework strategic resourcing includes specific strategies for:

- *Workforce planning*, alternatively called human resource planning – assessing future business needs and deciding on the numbers and types of people required.
- *Developing the organization's employee value proposition and its employer brand* – the employee value proposition is what an organization offers that prospective or existing employees would value and which would help to persuade them to join or remain with the business; employer brand is the image presented by an organization as a good employer.
- *Resourcing plans* – preparing plans for finding people from within the organization and/or for learning and development programmes to help people learn new skills. If needs cannot be satisfied from within the organization, it involves preparing longer-term plans for ensuring that recruitment and selection processes will satisfy them.
- *Retention plans* – preparing plans for retaining the people the organization needs.
- *Flexibility plans* – planning for increased flexibility in the use of human resources to enable the organization to make the best use of people and adapt swiftly to changing circumstances.
- *Talent management* – ensuring that the organization has the talented people it requires to provide for management succession and meet present and future business needs.

## CASE STUDY

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### Recruitment and retention strategy at Buckingham County Council

Attracting and retaining high-quality staff is considered key to the corporate strategy of Buckingham County Council, which employs around 14,000 people. Resourcing is one of the most important things the council does to improve performance.

#### Resourcing and people strategy

The resourcing strategy complements and reinforces the people strategy, which has five targets:

- 1 being the best employer;
- 2 bringing in additional talent;
- 3 developing existing talent;
- 4 championing diversity;
- 5 transforming the organization.

#### The people strategy dashboard

A people strategy dashboard has been created to ensure that human resources are managed more effectively. This extends the people strategy targets and is used to monitor progress in achieving them.

#### Improving recruitment and selection

This involved:

- strengthening the employer brand;
- developing a better recruitment website;
- developing a talent bank to ensure that vacancies were filled quickly;
- streamlining processes to reduce the time to fill vacancies;
- the development of a competency framework used for competency-based selection.

#### Retaining talent

An holistic approach is adopted to retaining talent. This involves paying attention to every aspect of the employment relationship and setting a best-employer target. A staff survey is used to measure employee engagement.

#### Total reward strategy

A total reward approach is adopted, including the use of total reward statements.

#### Talent management

A talent management toolkit is used to identify and develop potential high performers at every level in the organization.



**Key learning points: Strategic resourcing**

- Employee resourcing, generally known simply as 'resourcing' is the term used to describe activities concerned with the acquisition, retention and development of human resources.
- Strategic resourcing is concerned with ensuring that the organization obtains and retains the people it needs and employs them effectively. It is a key part of the strategic HRM process, which is fundamentally about matching human resources to the strategic and operational needs of the organization and ensuring the full utilization of those resources.
- The aim of strategic resourcing is therefore to ensure that a firm achieves competitive advantage by employing more capable people than its rivals. These people will have a wider and deeper range of skills and will behave in ways that will maximize their contribution.
- Strategic resourcing places more emphasis than traditional personnel management on finding people whose attitudes and behaviour are likely to be congruent with what management believes to be appropriate and conducive to success.
- The philosophy behind the strategic HRM approach to resourcing is that it is people who implement the strategic plan. Resourcing strategies exist to provide the people and skills required to support the business strategy, but they should also contribute to the formulation of that strategy.
- Strategic resourcing is not just about recruitment and selection. It is concerned with any means available to meet the needs of the firm for certain skills and behaviours.
- The overarching component of strategic resourcing is the integration of resourcing and business plans. Within this framework strategic resourcing includes specific strategies for:
  - 1 workforce planning;
  - 2 developing the organization's employee value proposition and its employer brand;
  - 3 resourcing plans;
  - 4 retention;
  - 5 flexibility;
  - 6 talent management.

## Questions

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- 1 What is resourcing?
- 2 What is strategic resourcing?
- 3 What is the essential nature of strategic resourcing?
- 4 What is the strategic HRM approach to resourcing?
- 5 What is meant by integrating business and resourcing strategies?
- 6 What are the components of resourcing strategy?

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# 17

# Workforce planning

## KEY CONCEPTS AND TERMS

Demand forecasting  
Hard human resources planning  
Human resources planning  
PESTLE analysis  
Ratio-trend analysis  
Scenario planning  
Soft human resources planning  
Supply forecasting  
SWOT analysis

## LEARNING OUTCOMES

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On completing this chapter you should be able to define these key concepts. You should also understand:

- The nature of workforce planning
- The link between workforce and business planning
- The rationale for workforce planning
- Workforce planning issues
- Approaches to workforce planning

## Introduction

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Organizations have to know how many people and what sort of people they need to meet present and future business requirements. This is the function of workforce planning. The purpose of this chapter is to describe how workforce planning functions, bearing in mind that it is not as straightforward as it was presented when the notion of ‘manpower planning’ became popular in the 1960s and 70s. Workforce planning, or human resource planning as it used to be called, may be well established in the HRM vocabulary but it does not seem to be embedded as a key HR activity.

This chapter starts with a definition of workforce planning and continues with a discussion of its aims and the issues involved, including its link with business planning. The final section of the chapter describes the processes used, namely scenario planning, demand and supply forecasting and action planning. A workforce planning toolkit is provided in Chapter 65.

## Workforce planning defined

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The following definition of workplace planning was produced by the CIPD (2010a: 4): ‘Workforce planning is a core process of human resource management that is shaped by the organizational strategy and ensures the right number of people with the right skills, in the right place at the right time to deliver short- and long-term organizational objectives.’

Workforce planning may be conducted as an overall approach to establishing and satisfying people requirements covering all major employee categories and skills. However, it frequently concentrates on key categories of staff, for example, doctors, nurses and other health workers in the National Health Service, skilled operatives in a manufacturing company, sales staff in a retail store or drivers in a transport company.

Rothwell (1995: 194) distinguished between HR planning in the hard sense – ‘to serve as an indicator of the likely match or mismatch of the supply and demand for the right number of people with appropriate skills’ – and HR planning in the soft sense – ‘to alert the organization to the implications of

business strategy for people development, culture and attitudes as well as numbers and skills’. The CIPD (2010a: 4) made a similar distinction between ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ workforce planning. As the report on their research commented:

Hard workforce planning is about numbers. In the past this often revolved around using past trends to predict the future, matching supply and demand for labour with the result that plans were often out of date before the ink was dry. Now there is more emphasis on management information that can help understand cause and effect of certain phenomena.

Soft workplace planning focuses on general issues relating to the supply of and demand for people and how they are deployed.

The precursor to workforce planning – manpower planning as conceived in the 1960s – was almost entirely about numbers in the shape of quantitative demand and supply forecasts. It was the failure in many organizations to produce accurate forecasts and therefore prepare meaningful plans that led to its decline if not fall. Workforce planning today covers a wider range of activities such as succession planning, smart working, flexible working and talent planning, and is not such a numbers game.

## Incidence of workforce planning

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The CIPD Annual Survey of Resourcing and Talent Planning (2010b) found that 61 per cent of organizations conducted workforce planning, although it was most common in the public services sector and in larger organizations: 20 per cent of organizations planned for less than one year, 41 per cent for one to two years and only 2 per cent for more than five years. The CIPD (2010a) research established that the top five planning activities were:

- 1 succession planning – 62 per cent;
- 2 flexible working – 53 per cent;
- 3 demand/supply forecasting – 53 per cent;
- 4 skills audit/gap analysis – 49 per cent;
- 5 talent management – 42 per cent.

## The link between workforce and business planning

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Workforce planning is an integral part of business planning. The strategic planning process defines projected changes in the types of activities carried out by the organization and the scale of those activities. It identifies the core competencies that the organization needs to achieve its goals and therefore its skill and behavioural requirements.

Workforce planning interprets these plans in terms of people requirements. But it may influence the business strategy by drawing attention to the ways in which people could be developed and deployed more effectively to further the achievement of business goals. It will also address issues concerning the supply of suitable people.

## Reasons for workforce planning

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Research conducted by the Institute for Employment Studies (Reilly, 1999) established that there were three main reasons why organizations engaged in workforce planning:

- 1 Planning for substantive reasons, that is, to have a practical effect by optimizing the use of resources and/or making them more flexible, acquiring and nurturing skills that take time to develop, identifying potential problems and minimizing the chances of making a bad decision.
- 2 Planning because of the process benefits, which involves understanding the present in order to confront the future, challenging assumptions and liberating thinking, making explicit decisions that can later be challenged, standing back and providing an overview and ensuring that long-term thinking is not driven out by short-term focus.
- 3 Planning for organizational reasons, which involves communicating plans so as to obtain support/adherence to them, linking HR plans to business plans so as to influence them, (re)gaining corporate control over

operating units and coordinating and integrating organizational decision-making and actions.

## Workforce planning issues

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The main difficulties faced by those involved in quantitative (hard) workforce planning are the impact of change and trying to predict the future. Many organizations therefore adopt a short-term approach and deal with deficits or surpluses of people as they arise. This problem is compounded by what Rothwell (1995) referred to as the shifting kaleidoscope of policy priorities and strategies within organizations. It sounds like a good idea to adopt an integrated approach to workforce and business planning but it won't work well if business plans are volatile, vague, misleading or non-existent, as they easily can be. Beardwell (2007: 62) commented that HR plans should be treated as 'tentative, flexible, and reviewed and modified on a regular basis'. Cappelli (2009: 10) noted that: 'The competitive environment for businesses is so changeable, and firms adjust their own strategies and practices so frequently that these estimates [of the demand for talent] are rarely accurate and they get much worse the farther out one goes.'

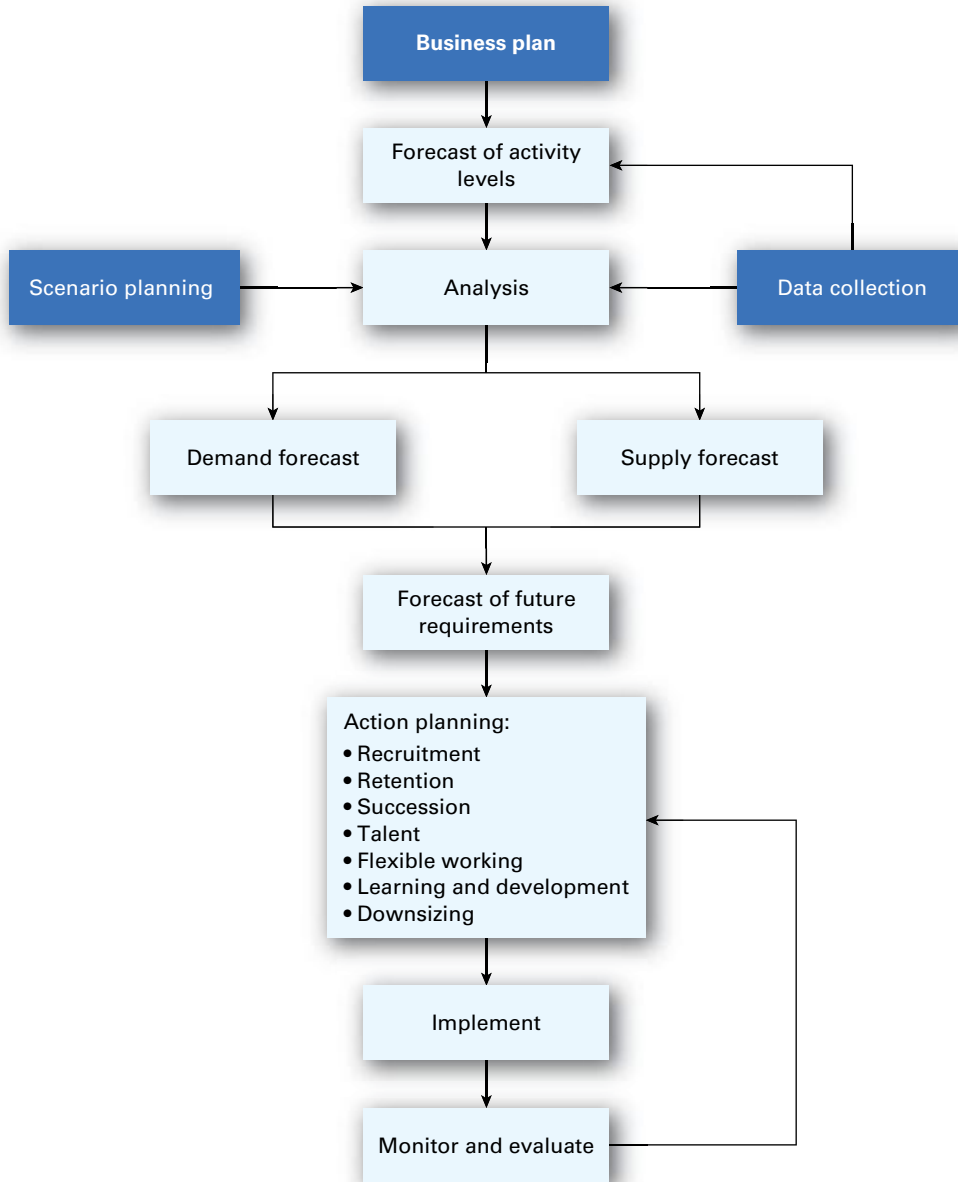
This problem will not be so acute in a stable marketplace, with largely passive (and static) customers, and with scope for long-term forecasting. But these are rare conditions today, even in the public sector where for a long time workplace planning has thrived.

It can be said that workforce planning is more art than science. Perhaps the accuracy of demand and supply forecasts is less important than the overall understanding of what the organization needs in the way of people, which can be generated by a systematic approach to planning.

## The systematic approach to workforce planning

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A flow chart of the process of workforce planning is shown in Figure 17.1. This identifies the main planning activities described below. Although these are

**FIGURE 17.1** Workforce planning flowchart

referred to as separate areas, they are interrelated and can overlap. For example, demand forecasts may be prepared on the basis of assumptions about the productivity of employees. But a forecast of the supply of suitable people will also have to consider productivity trends and how they might affect the supply. A more detailed flow chart is given in Chapter 65 (Figure 65.1).

## Business planning

The business plan provides the basis for the workforce plan insofar as it sets out what the organization intends to do in terms of activities and the scale of those activities.

## Forecast activity levels

Forecasts of future activity levels flow from the business plan, which will have implications for the demand for people. Activity level forecasts will also be affected by external factors, for example demographic and political policy trends, especially in the public sector. Data will need to be collected and analysed for this purpose.

## Scenario planning

Scenario planning is an assessment of the environmental changes that are likely to affect the organization so that a prediction can be made of the possible situations that may have to be dealt with in the future. The scenario may list a range of predictions so that different responses can be considered. The scenario is best based on systematic environmental scanning, possibly using the PESTLE approach (an assessment of the political, economic, social, legal, technological and economic factors that might affect the organization). The implications of these factors on the organization's labour markets and what can be done about any human resource issues can then be considered.

## Data collection

The information used in workforce planning can be collected under the following headings:

- *Qualitative internal data:* business information on product/market

developments, proposed work system and organizational changes; HR information on people (skills, performance, etc).

- *Quantitative internal data:* workforce data on turnover, absence, demographics, skills audits, etc.
- *Qualitative external data:* PESTLE analysis covering the following factors: political, economic, social, technological, legal and environmental.
- *Quantitative external data:* labour market – demographics, skills availability.

## Analysis

The analysis stage brings all the information together from the business plan, the activity forecast, scenarios and internal and external data to provide the basis for demand and supply forecasts.

## Demand forecasting

Demand forecasting is the process of estimating the future numbers of people required and the likely skills and competences they will need. The basis of the forecast is the annual budget and longer-term business plan, translated into activity levels for each function and department. In a manufacturing company the sales budget would be translated into a manufacturing plan, giving the numbers and types of products to be made in each period. From this information the number of hours to be worked by each skill category to make the quota for each period would be computed.

Details are required of any organizational and work plans that would result in increased or decreased demands for employees. Examples are setting up a new regional organization, creating a new sales department, decentralizing a head office function to the regions, plans for new methods of working, additional outsourcing, increasing productivity and reducing employment costs. The demand forecasting methods for estimating the numbers of people required are described below.

## Managerial judgement

The most typical method of forecasting used is managerial judgement. This simply requires managers to sit down, think about their future workloads,

and decide how many people they need. It may be quite unscientific and misleading.

Forecasting might be done on a 'bottom-up' basis with line managers submitting proposals for agreement by senior management. Alternatively, a 'top-down' approach can be used, in which company and departmental forecasts are prepared by top management, possibly acting on advice from the personnel departments. These forecasts are reviewed and agreed with departmental managers. A less directive approach is for top management to prepare planning guidelines for departmental managers, setting out the planning assumptions and the targets they should try to meet.

Perhaps the best way of using managerial judgement is to adopt both the 'bottom-up' and 'top-down' approaches. Guidelines for departmental managers should be prepared, indicating broad company assumptions about future activity levels that will affect their departments. Targets are also set where necessary. Armed with these guidelines, departmental managers prepare their forecasts to a laid-down format. They are encouraged to seek help at this stage from the personnel or work study departments. Meanwhile, the HR department, in conjunction as necessary with planning and work study departments, prepares a company forecast. The two sets of forecasts can then be reviewed by a human resource planning committee consisting of functional heads. This committee reconciles with departmental managers any discrepancies between the two forecasts and submits the final amended forecast to top management for approval. This is sometimes called the 'right-angle method'.

### Ratio-trend analysis

Ratio-trend analysis is carried out by analysing existing ratios between an activity level and the number of employees working on that activity. The ratio is applied to forecast activity levels to determine an adjusted number of people required. Account can be taken of possible improvements in productivity that would affect the ratio. The analysis may be extended to cover employees connected to but not directly involved in the activity – the indirect workers who provide support to the direct workers responsible for carrying out the activity. The existing ratio of directs to indirects would be applied to the forecast number of directs needed to deal with the new activity levels to forecast the number of indirects needed.

### Work study techniques

Work study techniques are used in association with activity level forecasts to calculate how long operations should take and the number of people required. Work study techniques for direct workers can be combined with ratio-trend analysis to calculate the number of indirect workers needed.

### Forecasting skill and competency requirements

Forecasting skill and competency requirements is largely a matter of managerial judgement. This judgement should, however, be exercised on the basis of an analysis of the impact of projected product/market developments and the introduction of new technology, either information technology or computerized manufacturing.

### Supply forecasting

Supply forecasting measures the number of people likely to be available from within and outside the organization. The internal supply analysis covers the following areas:

- existing number of people employed by occupation, skill and potential;
- potential losses to existing resources through attrition (employee turnover);
- potential changes to existing resources through internal promotions;
- changes to the organization structure, new methods of working (including flexible working) more part-time working and different working hours;
- effect of increases in productivity;
- sources of supply from within the organization – existing employees and the outputs of talent management or training programmes.

The external supply analysis examines the local and national labour markets to assess implications for the availability of future people requirements. It will also take account of environmental changes as revealed by scenario planning.



## Forecast of future requirements

To forecast future requirements it is necessary to analyse the demand and supply forecasts to identify any deficits or surpluses. The analysis can be made with the help of spreadsheets. The basic data can be set out as follows:

1	Current number employed	700
2	Annual level of turnover	10 per cent
3	Expected losses during year	70
4	Balance at end year	630
5	Number required at end year	750
6	Number to be obtained	$(5 - 4) = 120$ during year

The data on the number of employees required may be modified by reference to the impact of any productivity plans, organizational changes, new methods of working or revision of role responsibilities.

## Action planning

Action plans are derived from the broad resourcing strategies and the more detailed analysis of demand and supply factors. However, the plans often have to be short term and flexible because of the difficulty of making firm predictions about workforce requirements in times of rapid change. The planning

activities start with the identification of internal resources available now or that could be made available through learning and development programmes. They continue with plans for recruitment and retention, succession and talent management, the reduction of employee turnover and absenteeism, flexible working, outsourcing, productivity improvement and the revision of role responsibilities. Learning and development programmes may be prepared to provide for future skill requirements. Regrettably, but sometimes inevitably, plans for downsizing may be necessary, but these can aim to avoid compulsory redundancies by such means as recruitment freezes.

## Implementation

The implementation of the action plans will provide a challenge. A flexible approach involving quick responses is needed to cope with unforeseeable changes in people requirements.

## Monitoring and evaluation

Because of unpredictable events, the implementation of action plans does not always run smoothly. It is necessary to monitor progress carefully, evaluate the effects and, as required, amend the action plan.

## CASE STUDIES

### Buckinghamshire County Council

Business need drove the workforce planning project at Buckinghamshire County Council. This recognized that current workforce planning practices would not meet the challenge of the Care Standards Act 2000, or of future service delivery. One of the main issues in working with children and families was recruiting and retaining qualified social workers. There were insufficient numbers of social workers in post. Turnover levels among established and new employees were high.

The council therefore decided to align strategy and workforce planning in social care for children and families. The workforce plan was developed with the input of a

team of representatives from social care for children and families. It was recognized that workforce planning was essential to anticipate future areas of skills shortages. This council is now in a position to anticipate skills shortages and has dealt with them innovatively and immediately.

The workforce plan looked at short- and long-term planning. Short-term planning covered immediate action on recruitment and promotion. Long-term planning covered activities that may span the next five years. Workforce planning allowed for an assessment of skills and an exploration of the levels employees need to work at.

## Plymouth Primary Care Trust

The trust set up a multidisciplinary team drawn from the workforce planning and development department, finance and public health teams within the organization to introduce workforce planning across the whole organization. The trust's 230 managers and budget holders were then invited to an awareness programme to introduce the Six Steps Workforce Planning Methodology developed by the NHS Workforce Projects Team (2009). The steps are:

- 1 Define the plan.
- 2 Map service change.
- 3 Define the required workforce.
- 4 Understand workforce availability.
- 5 Plan to deliver the required workforce.
- 6 Implement, monitor and refresh.

Managers were informed that, using this framework, they would be required to produce plans over a one-year, two-year and five-year timescale. The guide was applied by asking each manager to define their workforce plan, outline forces for change, assess demand, assess supply, undertake a gap analysis and subsequent action planning and carry out implementation and a review of the plans.

It was found that while some managers were skilled in workforce planning, the majority needed support to link together the financial, workforce and planning elements of the process. The outcomes were:

- trust-wide workforce planning, using electronic staff record and planning tools;
- workforce planning is now part of day-to-day trust business;
- detailed workforce plans across clinical and non-clinical directorates;
- increased awareness of financial position, age profiles, and workforce risk assessment;
- the development of a more efficient workforce by reviewing skill mix and succession planning;
- integration of workforce planning into the corporate management programme.

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## Siemens (UK)

Workforce planning at Siemens (UK), the engineering and technology services company, (as reported by the CIPD, 2010a), involves obtaining answers to three fundamental questions: What do we have? What do we want? How do we fill the gap?

At the highest level, the corporate people strategy gives the context for workforce planning, the key objective of which is to ensure that Siemens has the right level of capability to execute business strategy. In essence, the process of workforce planning is one in which the business strategy converges with the people strategy.

The workforce planning process starts with a review of the current workforce derived from SAP data [SAP is a business software system] and onto this is overlaid the likely attrition. Future requirements are identified by means of a dialogue between HR business partners and business unit managers. This enables the skills in each job family to be matched to business initiatives and provides the basis for the workforce forecast.

## Key learning points: Workforce planning

### Workforce planning defined

The following definition of workplace planning was produced by the CIPD (2010a: 4): 'Workforce planning is a core process of human resource management that is shaped by the organizational strategy and ensures the right number of people with the right skills, in the right place at the right time to deliver short- and long-term organizational objectives.'

### Incidence of workforce planning

The CIPD (2010a) research revealed that workforce planning in one form or another is taking place in many organizations.

### Link to business planning

Workforce planning is an integral part of business planning.

### The rationale for workforce planning

Workforce planning provides a basis for a systematic approach to assessing the number and type of people needed and, having taken into account information on the supply of labour and environmental scanning, for the preparation of recruitment, retention, management succession and talent management plans. Workforce planning

is important because it encourages employers to develop clear and explicit links between their business and HR plans and to integrate the two more effectively.

### Workforce planning issues

The main difficulties faced by those involved in workforce planning are the impact of change and predicting the future.

### Approaches to workforce planning

- Business planning.
- Forecast activity levels.
- Scenario planning.
- Data collection.
- Analysis.
- Demand forecasting.
- Supply forecasting.
- Forecast of future requirements.
- Action planning.
- Implementation.
- Monitoring and evaluation.

## Questions

- 1 What is workforce planning?
- 2 What is the link between business and workforce planning?
- 3 What is the rationale for workforce planning?
- 4 What are the main approaches to workforce planning?

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# 18

## Recruitment and selection

### KEY CONCEPTS AND TERMS

Biodata	Psychological test
Criterion measure	Psychometric test
Employer brand	Recruitment
Employer of choice	Recruitment process outsourcing (RPO)
Intelligence quotient (IQ)	Reliability (test)
Job board	Role profile
Knowledge, skills and abilities (KSAs)	Selection
Person specification	Validity (test)
Predictive ability	Web 2.0

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

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On completing this chapter you should be able to define these key concepts. You should also understand:

- The recruitment and selection process
- Defining requirements
- Attracting candidates
- Processing applications
- Selection methods – interviewing and tests
- References and offers
- Dealing with recruitment problems

## Introduction

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Recruitment is the process of finding and engaging the people the organization needs. Selection is that part of the recruitment process concerned with deciding which applicants or candidates should be appointed to jobs. Recruitment can be costly. The 2013 CIPD survey of resourcing and talent planning found that the average recruitment cost of filling a vacancy for a director or senior manager was £8,000 while for other employees it was £3,000.

## The recruitment and selection process

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The stages of recruitment and selection are:

- 1 Defining requirements.
- 2 Attracting candidates.
- 3 Sifting applications.
- 4 Interviewing.
- 5 Testing.
- 6 Assessing candidates.
- 7 Obtaining references.
- 8 Checking applications.
- 9 Offering employment.
- 10 Following up.

## Defining requirements

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The number and categories of people required may be set out in formal workforce plans from which are derived detailed recruitment plans. More typically, requirements are expressed as ad hoc demands for people because of the creation of new posts, expansion into new activities or areas, or the need for a replacement. These short-term demands may put HR under pressure to deliver candidates quickly.

Requirements are set out in the form of role profiles and person specifications. These provide the information required to post vacancies on the company's website or the internet, draft advertisements, brief agencies or recruitment consultants and assess candidates by means of interviews and selection tests.

## Role profiles

Role profiles define the overall purpose of the role, its reporting relationships and the key result areas. For recruiting purposes, the profile is extended to include information on terms and conditions (pay, benefits and hours of work); special requirements such as mobility, travelling or unsocial hours; and learning, development and career opportunities. The recruitment role profile provides the basis for a person specification.

## Person specification

A person specification, also known as a recruitment or job specification, defines the knowledge, skills and abilities (KSAs) required to carry out the role, the types of behaviour expected from role holders (behavioural competencies) and the education, qualifications, training and experience needed to acquire the necessary KSAs. The specification is set out under the following headings:

- *Knowledge* – what the individual needs to know to carry out the role.
- *Skills and abilities* – what the individual has to be able to do to carry out the role.
- *Behavioural competencies* – the types of behaviour required for successful performance of the role. These should be role-specific, ideally based on an analysis of employees who are carrying out their roles effectively. The behaviours should also be linked to the core values and competency framework of the organization to help in ensuring that candidates will fit and support the organization's culture.
- *Qualifications and training* – the professional, technical or academic qualifications required or the training that the candidate should have undertaken.
- *Experience* – the types of achievements and activities that would be likely to predict success.
- *Specific demands* – anything that the role holder will be expected to achieve in specified areas, eg develop new markets or products; improve sales, productivity or levels of customer service; introduce new systems or processes.

- *Special requirements* – travelling, unsocial hours, mobility, etc.

It is advisable not to overstate the requirements. Perhaps it is natural to go for the best, but setting an unrealistically high level for candidates increases the problems of attracting applicants and results in dissatisfaction among recruits when they find their talents are not being used. Understating requirements can, of course, be equally dangerous, but it happens less frequently.

The KSAs and competencies defined in the role profile form a fundamental feature of the selection process, which becomes more of a person-based than a job-based approach. They are used as the basis for structured interviews and provide guidance on which selection techniques, such as psychological testing or assessment centres, are most likely to be useful.

The following is an example of the key KSA and competencies parts of a person specification for an HR recruitment adviser.

### KSA and competency requirements for a recruitment adviser

#### 1 Knowledge of:

- all aspects of recruitment;
- sources of recruits;
- different media for use in recruiting;
- relevant test instruments (OPQ qualified).

#### 2 Skills and abilities in:

- interviewing techniques;
- test administration;
- role analysis.

#### 3 Behavioural competencies:

- able to relate well to others and use interpersonal skills to achieve desired objectives;
- able to influence the behaviour and decisions of people on matters concerning recruitment and other HR or individual issues;
- able to cope with change, to be flexible and to handle uncertainty;
- able to make sense of issues, identify and solve problems and 'think on one's feet';
- focus on achieving results;
- able to maintain appropriately directed energy and stamina, to exercise self-control and to learn new behaviours;
- able to communicate well, orally and on paper.

## Attracting candidates

The following steps are required when planning how to attract candidates:

- 1 Analyse recruitment strengths and weaknesses to develop an employee value proposition and employer brand.
- 2 Analyse the requirement to establish what sort of person is needed.
- 3 Identify potential sources of candidates.

### Analyse recruitment strengths and weaknesses

Attracting candidates is primarily a matter of identifying, evaluating and using the most appropriate sources of applicants. However, in cases where difficulties in attracting or retaining candidates are being met or anticipated, it may be necessary to carry out a study of the factors that are likely to attract or deter candidates – the strengths and weaknesses of the organization as an employer. The study could make use of an attitude survey to obtain the views of existing employees. The analysis should cover such matters as the national or local reputation of the organization, pay, employee benefits and working conditions, the intrinsic interest of the job, security of employment, opportunities for education and training, career prospects, and the location of the office or plant.

Candidates are, in a sense, selling themselves, but they are also buying what the organization has to offer. If, in the latter sense, the labour market is a buyer's market, then the company selling itself to candidates must study their wants and needs in relation to what it can provide. The study can be used to develop an employee value proposition (what an organization has to offer that prospective or existing employees would value and that would help to persuade them to join the business) and an employee brand (the image presented by an organization as a good employer) incorporating the features set out above. They can contribute to the recruitment material used on corporate websites and in advertisements and brochures to help make the organization 'an employer of choice'.

### Analyse the requirement

First it is necessary to establish what jobs have to be filled and by when. Then turn to an existing role profile and person specification or, if not available or out of date, draw up new ones that set out information on responsibilities and competency requirements. This information can be analysed to determine the required education, qualifications and experience.

The next step is to consider where suitable candidates are likely to come from: within the organization, from other organizations or from education establishments, and the parts of the country where they can be found. Next, define the terms and conditions of the job (pay and benefits).

Finally, refer to the analysis of strengths and weaknesses to assess what it is about the job or the organization that is likely to attract good candidates, so that the most can be made of these factors when advertising the vacancy or reaching potential applicants in other ways. Consider also what might put them off, for example the location of the job, so that objections can be anticipated. Analyse previous successes or failures to establish what does or does not work.

### Identify sources of candidates

First consideration should be given to internal candidates. In addition, it is always worth trying to persuade former employees to return to the organization or obtain suggestions from existing employees (referrals). Talent banks that record candidate details electronically can be maintained and referred to at this stage.

If these approaches do not work, the sources of candidates are online recruiting, social media, advertising, recruitment agencies, job centres, consultants, recruitment process outsourcing providers and direct approaches to educational establishments. The main sources used by employers, as established by the 2013 CIPD survey, were:

- own corporate website – 62 per cent;
- recruitment agencies – 49 per cent;
- employee referral scheme – 33 per cent;
- professional networking, eg LinkedIn – 32 per cent;
- commercial job boards – 32 per cent;



- local newspaper advertisements – 29 per cent;
- specialist journals – 24 per cent;
- Jobcentre Plus – 19 per cent;
- search consultants – 17 per cent;
- links with educational establishments – 14 per cent;
- national newspaper advertisements – 12 per cent;
- social networking sites – 9 per cent.

Note the predominance of corporate websites and local agencies as sources of candidates. It is also interesting to note that referrals are the third most popular method.

There is usually a choice between different methods or combinations of them. The criteria to use when making the choice are: 1) the likelihood that it will produce good candidates; 2) the speed with which the choice enables recruitment to be completed; and 3) the costs involved, bearing in mind that there may be direct advertising costs or consultants' fees.

## Online recruitment

Online or e-recruitment uses the internet to advertise or 'post' vacancies, provides information about jobs and the organization and enables e-mail communications to take place between employers and candidates. The latter can apply for jobs online and can e-mail application forms and CVs to employers or agencies. Tests can be completed online. The main types of online recruitment sites are corporate websites, commercial job boards and agency sites. Social media as described below is also used extensively.

The advantages of online recruiting are that it can reach a wider range of possible applicants. It is quicker and cheaper than traditional methods of advertising, more details of jobs and firms can be supplied on the site, and CVs can be matched and applications can be submitted electronically. More than four-fifths of respondents to the CIPD's 2013 survey reported that it helped them to increase the strength of their employer brand. The disadvantages are that it may produce too many irrelevant or poor applications and it is still not the first choice of many job seekers. Consider using it in conjunction with other recruitment methods to maximize response.

*Corporate websites* may simply list vacancies and contact details. A more elaborate approach would consist of a dedicated website area that gives details of vacancies, person specifications, benefits and how to apply for jobs, for example by completing online application forms and tests. Such areas may be linked directly to an organization's home page so that general browsers can access them. An intranet link may be available to enable internal staff to access the website. Some organizations are building their own professional communities or talent networks. The management of websites can be outsourced to recruitment consultants or specialized web agencies. The following are guidelines on the use of websites:

- Keep the content of the site up to date.
- Ensure the site is accessible directly or through search engines.
- Provide contact numbers for those with technical problems.
- Take care over the wording of online copy – the criteria for good copy in conventional advertisements apply.

*Commercial job boards* are operated by specialized firms such as Monster.co.uk and Fish4jobs.com and consist of large databanks of vacancies. Companies pay to have their jobs listed on the sites. Information about vacancies may reproduce an advertisement so that the site is simply an additional form of communication, but some vacancies are only found online. Links may be provided to the organization's website. As recommended by Syedain (2012):

- Go for specialized sites rather than generalist.
- Stick to one or two sites rather than spreading your vacancy everywhere.
- If you are unsure about the best site, Google the job and browse the sites that come up in order to see which is most authoritative.
- Pay to obtain a prominent site.
- Bear in mind that people who look at the site are seeking a job. Job sites are not like print advertisements, which have to attract casual readers.
- Ensure that the information you provide is clear about what you are offering and the achievements, qualifications and experience you are looking for.

*Agency sites* are run by established recruitment agencies. Candidates register online but may be expected to discuss their details in person before these are forwarded to a prospective employer.

## Social media

The use of social media means applying Web 2.0 technologies to search for recruits and find out more about them online on sites such as LinkedIn and Facebook. Potential recruits sometimes provide blogs from existing employees covering their experiences in working for the organization.

The 2013 survey of the Forum for In-House Recruitment Managers (FIRM), whose members tend to be bigger employers, established that 94 per cent used LinkedIn for attracting and recruiting candidates and the remaining 6 per cent intend to do so. LinkedIn recruiter tools enable employers to see how the online population views their employer brand, search the world by sector, job level, specialism and geography and directly approach strangers. Syedain (2013) recommends that to make the most of LinkedIn it is necessary to:

- build and prime a personal network before you recruit;
- set aside time to seek out and engage relevant and promising talent;
- obtain advice or training in how to use LinkedIn as a recruiting tool;
- get buy-in from the top – encourage senior managers to keep their own profiles up to date;
- build the employer brand by encouraging to post information on their status updates that give a sense of the organization;
- talk to managers about who they know or can get introduced to online;
- create an employer page and keep it updated;
- personalize your direct approaches, whether InMails or invitations to connect;
- be selective about the number and type of jobs you publicize – it is easy to overwhelm people's feeds and inboxes.

As reported by Anna Cook (2012), head of CERN's recruitment unit, CERN, the world's largest particle physics laboratory, has successfully made use of social media. All job vacancies are advertised on

LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter. These networks provide much more than simple job boards in that they are used as communication tools to interact with the audience, with candidates and with people who are not necessarily candidates but may know people who may want to apply. Appropriate use is made of each medium. For example, Facebook is used to host a weekly question and answer session between one of CERN's recruiters and anyone who wants to submit a question, whereas the professional network LinkedIn provides a forum for more specialized discussions.

T-Mobile International has created a Facebook site for graduate recruitment. Potential graduate recruits established an individual presence on this invitation-only site. The site was used to provide information on selection procedures and processes, for example criteria and timetables and to allow the potential recruits to communicate with each other. As well as T-Mobile's IT department, an internal 'brand ambassador' was involved in design throughout.

## Advertising

Advertising has traditionally been the most obvious method of attracting candidates and it is still fairly important, especially at local level and in specialized journals. However, as the CIPD 2013 survey revealed, many organizations now prefer to use online recruitment, agencies or consultants. A conventional advertisement will have the following aims:

- Generate candidates – attract a sufficient number of good candidates at minimum cost.
- Attract attention – it must compete for the attention of potential candidates against other employees.
- Create and maintain interest – it has to communicate, in an attractive and interesting way, information about the job, the company and the terms and conditions of employment.
- Stimulate action – the message needs to be conveyed in a way that will prompt a sufficient number of replies from candidates with the right qualifications for the job.

To achieve these aims, it is necessary to carry out the actions set out below. A recruitment advertisement should start with a compelling headline and then contain information on the following:

- the organization;
- the job;
- the person required – qualifications, experience, etc;
- the pay and benefits offered;
- the location;
- the action to be taken.

The headline is all important. The simplest and most obvious approach is to set out the job title in bold type. To gain attention, it is advisable to quote the rate of pay and key benefits such as a company car. Applicants are suspicious of clauses such as ‘salary will be commensurate with age and experience’ or ‘salary negotiable’. This often means either that the salary is so low that the company is afraid to reveal it, or that pay policies are so incoherent that the company has no idea what to offer until someone tells them what he or she wants.

The name of the company should be given. Do not use box numbers – if you want to be anonymous, use a consultant. Add any selling points, such as growth or diversification, and any other areas of interest to potential candidates, such as career prospects. The essential features of the job should be conveyed by giving a brief description of what the job holder will do and, as far as space permits, the scope and scale of activities. Create interest in the job but do not oversell it.

The qualifications and experience required should be stated as factually as possible. There is no point in overstating requirements and seldom any point in specifying exactly how much experience is wanted. Be careful about including a string of personal qualities such as drive, determination and initiative. These have no real meaning to candidates. Phrases such as ‘proven track record’ and ‘successful experience’ are equally meaningless. No one will admit to not having either of them.

The advertisement should end with information on how the candidate should apply. ‘Brief but comprehensive details’ is a good phrase. Candidates can be asked to write or e-mail their response, but useful alternatives are to ask them to telephone or to come along for an informal chat at a suitable venue.

Remember the anti-discrimination legislation set out in the Equality Act (2010). This makes it unlawful to discriminate in an advertisement by favouring either sex, the only exceptions being a few jobs that can be done only by one sex. Advertisements must

therefore avoid sexist job titles such as ‘salesman’ or ‘stewardess’. They must refer to a neutral title such as ‘sales representative’, or amplify the description to cover both sexes by stating ‘steward or stewardess’. Potential respondents should be referred to only as the ‘candidate’ or the ‘applicant’, otherwise you must specify ‘man or woman’ or ‘he or she’. It is accepted, however, that certain job titles are unisex and therefore non-discriminatory, including director, manager, executive and officer.

It is also unlawful to place an advertisement that discriminates against any particular race. As long as race is never mentioned or even implied in an advertisement, you should have no problem in keeping within the law. The Equality Act also makes it unlawful to discriminate against employees on account of their age. Age limits should therefore not be included in advertisements and the wording should not indicate that people below or above a certain age are not wanted.

It is essential to measure the response to advertisements to provide guidance on the relative cost-effectiveness of different media. Cost per reply is the best ratio.

## Recruitment agencies

Most recruitment agencies deal with secretarial and office staff who are registered with them. They are usually quick and effective but quite expensive. Agencies can charge a fee for finding someone of 15 per cent or more of the first year’s salary. It can be cheaper to advertise or use the internet, especially when the company is in a buyer’s market. Shop around to find the agency that suits the organization’s needs at a reasonable cost.

Agencies should be briefed carefully on what is wanted. They can produce unsuitable candidates but the risk is reduced if they are clear about the requirements.

## Jobcentre Plus

The jobcentres operated by the government are mainly useful for manual and clerical workers and sales or call centre assistants.

## Recruitment consultants

Recruitment consultants advertise, interview and produce a shortlist. They provide expertise and reduce workload. The organization can be anonymous

if it wishes. Most recruitment consultants charge a fee based on a percentage of the basic salary for the job, usually ranging from 15 to 20 per cent.

When choosing a recruitment consultant check their reputation and expertise, compare fees and meet the person who will work on the assignment to assess his or her quality. To use them effectively:

- Agree terms of reference.
- Brief them on the organization, where the job fits in, why the appointment is to be made, terms and conditions and any special requirements.
- Give them every assistance in defining the job and the person specification – they will do much better if they have comprehensive knowledge of what is required and what type of person is most likely to fit into the organization well.
- Check carefully the proposed programme and the draft text of the advertisement.
- Clarify the arrangements for interviewing and shortlisting.
- Clarify the basis upon which fees and expenses will be charged.
- Ensure that arrangements are made to deal directly with the consultant who will handle the assignment.

### Executive search consultants

Use an executive search consultant or ‘headhunter’ for senior jobs where there is only a limited number of suitable people and a direct lead to them is wanted. Headhunters are not cheap. They charge a fee of 30 to 50 per cent or so of the first year’s salary, but they can be quite cost-effective.

Executive search consultants first approach their own contacts in the industry or profession concerned. The good ones have an extensive range of contacts and their own data bank. They will also have researchers who will identify suitable people who may fit the specification or can provide a lead to someone else who may be suitable. The more numerous the contacts, the better the executive

search consultant. When a number of potentially suitable and interested people have been assembled, a fairly relaxed and informal meeting takes place and the consultant forwards a shortlist to the client with full reports on candidates.

There are some good and some not so good executive search consultants. Do not use one unless a reliable recommendation is obtained.

### Educational and training establishments

Many jobs can, of course, be filled by school leavers. For some organizations the main source of recruits for training schemes will be universities and colleges as well as schools. Graduate recruitment is a major annual exercise for some companies, which go to great efforts to produce glossy brochures, visit campuses on the ‘milk run’ and use elaborate sifting and selection procedures to vet candidates, including ‘biodata’ and assessment centres.

### Recruitment process outsourcing

Recruitment process outsourcing (RPO) is the term used when an organization commissions a provider to take responsibility for the end-to-end delivery of the recruitment process, covering all vacancies or a selection of them. This involves liaising with hiring managers to define requirements and specifications, deciding on the best ways to attract candidates, processing applications, and setting up and facilitating interviews. Some companies do not hand over all recruitment, using RPO only for high-volume vacancies. They may retain responsibility for senior and specialist jobs.

The advantage of RPO is that it can save time, bring outside expertise to bear on recruitment problems and free up HR for more value-adding activities. The disadvantage is the perception by some HR people and line managers that the provider is too remote to deal with the real issues and that there is a danger of losing control.

### Comparison of sources

A summary of sources and an analysis of their advantages and disadvantages is given in Table 18.1.

**TABLE 18.1** Summary of sources of candidates

Source	Description	Advantages	Disadvantages
Online recruitment	Company websites, job boards, social media.	<p>Generally, can reach a wider range of possible applicants, and it is quicker and cheaper than traditional methods of advertising. More details of jobs and firms can be supplied on the site and CVs can be matched and applications can be submitted electronically.</p> <p>Websites can use an organization's brand to attract candidates.</p> <p>Job boards are keyword searchable. Job details can be changed and CVs managed electronically.</p> <p>Social media are good for reach – LinkedIn currently has 100 million members worldwide.</p>	<p>Generally, may produce too many irrelevant or poor applications and it is still not the first choice of many job seekers.</p> <p>Websites are expensive and still need other media to drive traffic to the site.</p> <p>Job boards are bad for 'passive seekers'.</p> <p>Social media – employer/recruiter has to manage own profile.</p>
Advertising	Display or classified advertisements in national or local newspapers or journals.	Attract 'passing trade' – people who are not actively looking for a job.	Soon become irrelevant.
Recruitment agencies	Mainly recruit office and sales staff who are registered with them.	Convenient, save time and trouble, draw on an established pool of candidates.	Can produce unsuitable candidates. Pool may be limited.
Jobcentres	Mainly for manual workers and clerical and sales staff.	No cost; usually plenty of choice.	Limited to relatively routine jobs.
Recruitment consultants	Advertise, interview and produce a shortlist.	Provide expertise and reduce workload.	Can be expensive.
Executive search consultants	Conduct searches for senior executives.	Can find top-level people who might not otherwise be interested.	Expensive, limited to top jobs.
Educational establishments	Universities, colleges and schools.	Major source of future talent.	Recruitment campaigns can be costly.
Recruitment process outsourcing	Deliver complete recruiting process.	Save time, bring outside expertise to bear on recruitment problems and free up HR for more value-adding activities.	Feeling that provider is too remote to deal with the real issues and that there is a danger of losing control.

## Dealing with applications

If recruitment agencies or consultants are used they will deliver their client a shortlist of candidates for interview. If not, the organization has to sift the applications itself. This means examining the information supplied by applicants, sorting them and drawing up a shortlist of applicants to be interviewed.

### Examining information from candidates

Candidates may respond to an online notice or an advertisement with a formal application (by e-mail or letter), usually supported by a CV. Applicants may be asked to provide information about their education, qualifications, training and experience in a standardized format to provide a structured basis for drawing up shortlists, the interview itself and for the subsequent actions in offering an appointment and in setting up records. This ensures that all applicants are considered on the same basis against the person specification.

An application form, as illustrated in Figure 18.1, which sets out the information required, can be completed online (preferable if an online application has been made) or on paper. The following suggestions have been made by Pioro and Baum (2005) on how to use application forms more effectively:

- Decide what the criteria for selection are and how these will be assessed by use of the application form.
- Keep questions clear, relevant and non-discriminatory.
- Ask for only the bare minimum of personal details.
- Widen your pool of applicants by offering different options and guidance for completing and viewing application forms.
- Employers may also refer for further information to social networks or the candidate's own blog.

However, to save time and trouble, recruiters may prefer to make a decision on the details provided in the initial application where it is clear that an applicant meets or does not meet the specification.

### Processing applications

When the vacancy or vacancies have been posted or advertised and a fair number of replies received, the initial step is to list the applications on the recruitment database setting out name, date application received and actions taken (reject, hold, interview, shortlist, offer). A standard acknowledgement letter should be sent to each applicant unless an instant decision can be made to interview or reject. The next steps are to sift applications prior to drawing up a shortlist and arranging interviews.

### Sorting applications

Applications are sifted by comparing the information available about them with the key criteria in the person specification. The criteria should be analysed with care so that they are fully understood. The criteria can be classified under the following three headings so that they can be applied consistently to guide sifting decisions:

- 1 *Essential* – applicants will not be considered unless this criterion is satisfied.
- 2 *Very desirable* – preference will be given to applicants who meet this criterion.
- 3 *Desirable* – applicants who meet this criterion will be given favourable consideration but it is not an essential requirement. However, if a number of applicants meet the first two criteria, satisfying desirable criteria would be a factor in making a choice.

A highly structured method of sifting applications is provided by the use of biodata. These are items of biographical data that are criterion-based (ie they relate to established criteria in such terms as qualifications and experience that indicate whether individuals are likely to be suitable). These are objectively scored and, by measurements of past achievements, predict future behaviour.

Following the analysis, applicants can be sorted initially into three categories: possible, marginal and unsuitable. The more information made available and the clearer the criteria the easier this process is. When there is a large field of applicants with many 'possibles', sifting may have to be repeated against more stringent criteria until a shortlist for interview is identified.

**FIGURE 18.1** Example of application form (compressed)

<b>APPLICATION FORM</b>					
<b>Surname:</b>			<b>First name:</b>		
<b>Address:</b>					
<b>Tel. (home)</b>		<b>Tel. (work)</b>		<b>e-mail (personal)</b>	
<b>Position applied for:</b>					
<b>Education</b>					
<b>Dates</b>		<b>Name of secondary school, college or university</b>	<b>Main subjects taken</b>	<b>Qualifications</b>	
<b>From</b>	<b>To</b>				
<b>Specialized training received</b>					
<b>Other qualifications and skills (languages, keyboard skills, current driving licence, etc)</b>					
<b>Employment history</b>					
(Give details of all positions held since completing full-time education, start with your present or most recent position and work back)					
<b>Dates</b>		<b>Name of employer, address and nature of business including any service in the Armed Forces</b>	<b>Position and summary of main duties</b>	<b>Starting and leaving rate of pay</b>	<b>Reasons for leaving or wanting to leave</b>
<b>From</b>	<b>To</b>				
<b>Add any comments you wish to make to support your application</b>					
<b>I confirm that the information given on this application form is correct</b>					
<b>Signature of applicant.....Date.....</b>					



Ideally, the numbers on the shortlist should be between four and eight. Fewer than four leaves relatively little choice (although such a limitation may be forced on the recruiter if an insufficient number of good applications have been received). More than eight will mean that too much time is spent on interviewing and there is a danger of diminishing returns.

### **Draw up an interviewing programme**

The time allowed for an interview will vary according to the complexity of the job. For a fairly routine job, 30 minutes or so should suffice. For a more senior job, 60 minutes or more is required. It is best not to schedule too many interviews per day for more senior jobs – interviewers who try to conduct more than five or six exacting interviews will quickly run out of steam and do neither the interviewee nor the organization any justice. It is advisable to leave about 15 minutes between interviews to write up notes and prepare for the next one.

### **Administering the selection programme**

When the interviewing programme has been drawn up shortlisted candidates can be invited for interview, using a standard letter where large numbers are involved. Candidates should be asked to complete an application form if they have not already done so. There is a lot to be said at this stage for sending candidates more details of the organization and the job so that too much time is not spent in going through this information at the interview.

Review the remaining ‘possibles’ and ‘marginals’ and decide if any are to be held in reserve. Send reserves a standard ‘holding’ letter and send the others a standard rejection letter. The latter should thank candidates for the interest shown and inform them briefly, but not too brusquely, that they have not been successful. A typical reject letter might read as follows:

Since writing to you on... we have given careful consideration to your application for the above position. I regret to inform you, however, that we have decided not to ask you to attend for an interview. We should like to thank you for the interest you have shown.

## **Selection methods**

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The aim of selection is to assess the suitability of candidates by predicting the extent to which they will be able to carry out a role successfully. It involves deciding on the degree to which the characteristics of applicants in terms of their KSAs, competencies, experience, qualifications, education and training match the person specification and then using this assessment to make a choice between candidates. The so-called ‘classic trio’ of selection methods consists of application forms, interviews and references. To these should be added selection tests and assessment centres.

Interviews are normally conducted by means of a face-to-face discussion. But, as established by the CIPD’s 2013 survey, a considerable proportion of employers (56 per cent) conduct interviews by telephone. Nearly one-third (30 per cent) use video or Skype interviews, rising to 42 per cent of those who recruit from overseas.

### **Interviews**

The interview is the most familiar method of selection. The aim is to elicit information about candidates that will enable a prediction to be made about how well they will do the job and thus lead to a selection decision.

An interview involves face-to-face discussion. When it is an individual rather than a panel interview, it provides the best opportunity for the establishment of close contact – rapport – between the interviewer and the candidate, thus easing the acquisition of information about the candidate’s suitability and how well he or she would fit into the organization. As described below, interviews should be structured (detailed consideration of selection interviewing skills is given in Chapter 50). The advantages and disadvantages of interviews are as follows.

### **Advantages of interviews**

- Provide opportunities for interviewers to ask probing questions about the candidate’s experience and to explore the extent to which the candidate’s competencies match those specified for the job.



- Enable interviewers to describe the job (a 'realistic job preview') and the organization in more detail, providing some indication of the terms of the psychological contract.
- Provide opportunities for candidates to ask questions about the job and to clarify issues concerning training, career prospects, the organization and terms and conditions of employment.
- Enable a face-to-face encounter to take place so that the interviewer can make an assessment of how the candidate would fit into the organization and what he or she would be like to work with.
- Give the candidate the same opportunity to assess the organization, the interviewer and the job.

### Disadvantages of interviews

- Can lack validity as a means of making sound predictions of performance, and lack reliability in the sense of measuring the same things for different candidates.
- Rely on the skill of the interviewer – many people are poor at interviewing, although most think that they are good at it.
- Can lead to biased and subjective judgements by interviewers.

These disadvantages are most common when unstructured interviews are used, but they can be alleviated: first, by using a structured approach as described below; second, by training interviewers. The use of other opinions can also help to reduce bias, especially if the same structured approach is adopted by all the interviewers. Finally, selection tests, especially those measuring intelligence or general ability, can provide valuable information that supplements the interview.

## Interview arrangements

Interviews are frequently conducted on a one-to-one basis but there is a case for using a second interviewer in order to avoid a biased or superficial decision. The alternative is a selection board or panel, which is often used in the public sector. This brings together a number of parties interested in the

selection decision. But the drawbacks are that questions tend to be unplanned and delivered at random and the candidates are unable to do justice to themselves because they may not be allowed to expand on their responses.

### Structured interviews

A structured interview is one based on a defined framework. Within the framework there may be a set of predetermined questions. All candidates are asked the same questions, which will focus on the attributes and behaviours required to succeed in the job. The answers may be scored through a rating system.

The most typical framework is the person specification. Interview questions aim to analyse and build on the information provided by the candidate's CV or application form to establish the extent to which a candidate has the required knowledge, skills and abilities (KSAs). In a competency-based interview the emphasis is on establishing if the candidate has the right level of desirable behavioural competencies. A structured interview may include experience-based questions in which candidates are asked to relate how they handled situations in the past requiring skills and abilities necessary for effective performance in the job for which they are applying. And/or it may include situational questions that provide candidates with hypothetical job-relevant situations and ask how they would deal with them. Research by Pulakos and Schmitt (1995) found that experience-based interviews yielded higher levels of validity than situation-based ones. But as described in Chapter 50, both types of questions may be incorporated in an interview.

### Unstructured interviews

Unstructured interviews are essentially a general discussion during which the interviewer asks a few questions that are relevant to what he or she is looking for but without any specific aim in mind other than getting an overall picture of the candidate as an individual. Questions are often random and non-specific. Candidates are judged on the general impression they make and the process is likely to be quite subjective. Research quoted later in this chapter has shown that the predictive validity (the extent to which it predicts performance in a job) of an unstructured interview is fairly low. The preferred method is a structured interview, which when conducted well has a higher level of predictive validity.

## Selection testing

Selection tests are used to provide valid and reliable evidence of levels of abilities, intelligence, personality characteristics, aptitudes and attainments. Psychological tests are measuring instruments, which is why they are often referred to as psychometric tests: ‘psychometric’ means mental measurement. Psychometric tests assess intelligence or personality. They use systematic and standardized procedures to measure differences in individual characteristics, thus enabling selectors to gain a greater understanding of candidates to help in predicting the extent to which they will be successful in a job. The other types of tests described below are ability and aptitude tests.

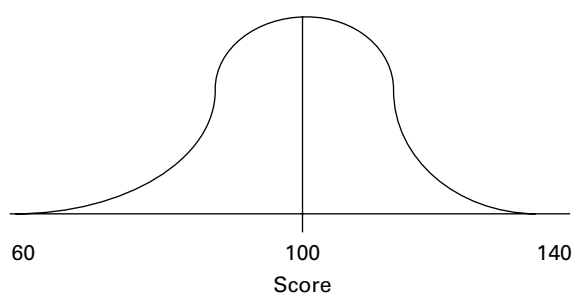
## Intelligence tests

Intelligence tests measure a range of mental abilities that enable a person to succeed at a variety of intellectual tasks using the faculties of abstract thinking and reasoning. They are concerned with general intelligence (termed ‘g’ by Spearman (1927) one of the pioneers of intelligence testing) and are sometimes called ‘general mental ability’ (GMA) tests. Intelligence tests measure abilities while cognitive tests measure an individual’s learning in a specific subject area. They contain questions, problems and tasks. The meta-analysis conducted by Schmidt and Hunter (1998) showed that intelligence tests had high predictive validity.

The outcome of a test can be expressed as a score that can be compared with the scores of members of the population as a whole, or the population of all or part of the organization using the test (norms). An intelligence test may be recorded as an intelligence quotient (IQ), which is the ratio of an individual’s mental age to the individual’s actual age as measured by an intelligence test. When the mental and actual age correspond, the IQ is 100. Scores above 100 indicate that the individual’s level of average is above the norm for his or her age, and vice versa. It is usual now for IQs to be directly computed as an IQ test score. It is assumed that intelligence is distributed normally throughout the population; that is, the frequency distribution of intelligence corresponds with the normal curve shown in Figure 18.2.

The normal curve is a way of expressing how scores will typically be distributed; for example,

**FIGURE 18.2** A normal curve



that 60 per cent of the population are likely to get scores between  $x$  and  $y$ , 20 per cent are likely to get scores below  $x$  and 20 per cent are likely to get more than  $y$ .

Intelligence tests can be administered to a single individual or to a group. They can also be completed online.

## Personality tests

Personality tests attempt to assess the personality of candidates in order to make predictions about their likely behaviour in a role. There are many different theories of personality and, consequently, many different types of personality tests. These include self-report personality questionnaires and other questionnaires that measure interests, values or work behaviour.

Personality tests can provide interesting supplementary information about candidates that is free from the biased reactions that frequently occur in face-to-face interviews, but they have to be used with great care. The tests should have been developed by a reputable psychologist or test agency on the basis of extensive research and field testing, and they must meet the specific needs of the user.

## Ability tests

Ability tests establish what people are capable of knowing or doing. They measure the capacity for:

- *verbal reasoning* – the ability to comprehend, interpret and draw conclusions from oral or written language;
- *numerical reasoning* – the ability to comprehend, interpret and draw conclusions from numerical information;

- *spatial reasoning* – the ability to understand and interpret spatial relations between objects;
- *mechanical reasoning* – understanding of everyday physical laws such as force and leverage.

## Aptitude tests

Aptitude tests are occupational or job-related tests that assess the extent to which people can do the work. They typically take the form of work sample tests, which replicate an important aspect of the actual work the candidate will have to do, such as using a keyboard or carrying out a skilled task such as repair work. Work sample tests can be used only with applicants who are already familiar with the task through experience or training.

## Characteristics of a good test

A good test is one that provides data that enables reliable predictions of behaviour or performance to be made and therefore assists in the process of making objective and reasoned decisions when selecting people for jobs. It will be based on research that has produced standardized criteria derived by using the same measure to test a number of representative people to produce a set of ‘norms’ for comparison purposes. The test should be capable of being objectively scored by reference to the normal or average performance of the group.

The two key characteristics of a good test are first that it is reliable in the sense that it always measures the same thing: a test aimed at measuring a particular characteristic, such as intelligence, should measure the same characteristic when applied to different people at the same or a different time or to the same person at different times. Second, a test should be valid in the sense that it measures the characteristic that the test is intended to measure. Thus, an intelligence test should measure intelligence (however defined) and not simply verbal facility. A test meant to predict success in a job or in passing examinations should produce reasonably convincing (statistically significant) predictions.

A criterion-related approach is used to assess validity. This means selecting criteria against which the validity of the test can be measured. These criteria must reflect ‘true’ performance at work as accurately as possible. A single criterion is inadequate: multiple criteria should be used. The extent to

which criteria can be contaminated by other factors should also be considered and it should be remembered that criteria are dynamic – they will change over time.

## Interpreting test results

Test results can be interpreted by the use of norms or through criterion scores.

### Norms

An individual’s score in a test is not meaningful on its own. It needs to be compared with the scores achieved by the population on whom the test was standardized – the norm or reference group. A normative score is read from a norms table and might, for example, indicate that someone has performed the test at a level equivalent to the top 30 per cent of the relevant population.

### Criterion scores

Norms simply tell us how someone has performed a test relative to other people. A more powerful approach is to use the relationship between test scores and an indication of what the test is designed to measure, such as job success. This is described as a criterion measure.

## The use of tests in a selection procedure

Validated intelligence and personality tests will produce useful data, but there is much to be said for combining them in a selection procedure with structured interviews.

Tests are often used as part of a selection procedure for occupations where a large number of recruits are required, and where it is not possible to rely entirely on examination results or information about previous experience as the basis for predicting future performance. In these circumstances it is economical to develop and administer the tests, and a sufficient number of cases can be built up for the essential validation exercise. Tests usually form part of an assessment centre programme. They can be administered online and FIRM’s 2013 membership survey showed that they were used for 72 per cent of applications.

Intelligence tests are particularly helpful in situations where intelligence is a key factor and there is no other reliable method of measuring it. Aptitude

tests are most useful for jobs where specific and measurable skills are required, such as word-processing and skilled repair work. Personality tests can complement structured interviews and intelligence and aptitude tests. Some organizations use them for jobs such as selling, where they believe that 'personality' is important and where it is not too difficult to obtain quantifiable criteria for validation purposes. They may be used to assess integrity and conscientiousness where these characteristics are deemed to be important.

In some situations a battery of tests may be used, including various types of intelligence, personality and aptitude tests. These may be a standard battery supplied by a test agency, or a custom-built battery may be developed. The biggest pitfall to avoid is adding extra tests just for the sake of it, without ensuring that they make a proper contribution to the success of the predictions for which the battery is being used.

Tests should be administered only by people who have been trained in what the tests are measuring, how they should be used, and how they should be interpreted. Also, it is essential to evaluate all tests by comparing the results at the interview stage with later achievements. To be statistically significant, these evaluations should be carried out over a reasonable period of time and cover as large a number of candidates as possible.

## Assessment centres

Assessment centres assemble a group of candidates and use a range of assessment techniques over a concentrated period (one or two days) with the aim of providing a more comprehensive and balanced view of the suitability of individual members of the group. The main features of assessment centres are that:

- exercises are used to capture and simulate the key dimensions of the job;
- these may include one-to-one role-plays and group exercises; it is assumed that performance in these simulations predicts behaviour on the job;
- candidates are interviewed and tested;
- performance is measured in several dimensions in terms of the competencies required to achieve the target level of performance in a particular job or at a particular level in the organization;

- several candidates or participants are assessed together to allow interaction and to make the experience more open and participative;
- several trained assessors or observers are used in order to increase the objectivity of assessments.

The case for assessment centres is that they obtain much more information about candidates than conventional interviews, even when these are supplemented by tests. But research by Schmidt and Hunter (1998) has shown that on their own, the ability of assessment centres to predict how well someone will perform (predictive validity) is lower than that of intelligence tests combined with structured interviews. Assessment centres are expensive and time-consuming and their use tends to be restricted to large organizations for managerial positions or for graduates.

## Choice of selection methods

There is a choice between the selection methods. The most important criterion is the ability of a selection method or combination of methods to predict future performance. Predictive ability is expressed as a coefficient – complete validity would be 1.0; no validity would be 0.0.

The meta-analysis on the validity of different selection methods conducted by Schmidt and Hunter (1998: 265), which covered 85 years of research findings, produced the following predictive validity coefficients:

Intelligence tests and structured interviews	.63
Intelligence tests and unstructured interviews	.55
Assessment centres and structured interviews	.53
Intelligence tests only	.51
Structured interviews only	.51
Unstructured interviews only	.38
Assessment centres only	.37
Graphology only	.02

Robertson and Smith (2001) added personality assessments to this list, with a validity coefficient of .37.

Schmidt and Hunter (1998) established that the reason why intelligence (GMA) is such a good predictor of job performance is that more intelligent people acquire job knowledge more rapidly and acquire more of it, and it is this knowledge of how to perform the job that causes their job performance to be higher. Their research clearly indicates that the combination of structured interviews and intelligence tests is the most effective in terms of predictive validity. Graphology is useless.

## Provisional offers and obtaining references

After the interviewing and testing procedure has been completed, a provisional decision to make an offer by telephone or in writing can be made. This is normally 'subject to satisfactory references' and the candidate should, of course, be told that these will be taken up. If there is more than one eligible candidate for a job it may be advisable to hold one or two people in reserve. Applicants often withdraw, especially those whose only purpose in applying for the job was to carry out a 'test marketing' operation, or to obtain a lever with which to persuade their present employers to value them more highly.

The main purpose of a reference is to obtain in confidence factual information about a prospective employee. This information is straightforward and essential. It is necessary to confirm the nature of the previous job, the period of time in employment, the reason for leaving (if relevant), the salary or rate of pay and, possibly, the attendance record.

Opinions about character, competence, performance and suitability are unreliable. Referees are reluctant to commit themselves and they are not in any position to assess suitability – only the prospective employer can do that. Personal referees are, of course, entirely useless. All they prove is that the applicant has at least one or two friends.

A written request for a reference could simply ask the previous employer to confirm the candidate's employment record. More precise answers may be obtained if a standard form is provided for the employer to complete. The questions asked on this form should be limited to the following:

- What was the period of employment?
- What was the job title?

- What work was carried out?
- What was the rate of pay or salary?
- How many days' absence were there over the last 12 months?
- Would you re-employ (if not, why not)?

The last question is important, if it is answered honestly.

Telephone references may save time and may be more reliable. They can be used as an alternative or in addition to written references. Ask factual questions only and keep a record of the conversation.

## References – legal aspects

The key legal points that should be considered when asking for or giving references are:

- Once the decision has been made to make an offer, the letter should state that 'this is a provisional offer subject to the receipt of satisfactory references'.
- It has been generally held that there is no common law duty on an employer to provide references for a serving or past employee unless there is a term to that effect in the employment contract. But it has been ruled (*Spring v. Guardian Assurance 1994*) that there might be a moral duty to provide a reference where it is 'natural practice' to require a reference from a previous employer before offering employment, and where the employee could not expect to enter that type of employment without a reference.
- If a reference contains a false or unsubstantiated statement that damages the reputation of the individual, action for damages may result. It is possible to succeed in a claim for damages if it can be shown that the reference provided was negligent because reasonable care had not been taken in preparing it, which includes ensuring that it is factually correct.

## Checking applications

It is a sad fact that applicants all too often misinform their prospective employers about their education,

qualifications and employment record. This was confirmed by a survey carried out by the CIPD (2008), which found that 25 per cent of employers had to withdraw their offers because applicants had lied or misrepresented their application. It is always advisable to check with universities, professional institutes and previous employers that the facts given by applicants are correct. Other checks can be made such as:

- interview questions about actual (not hypothetical) experiences, with deep probing to ascertain the extent of the individual's personal involvement, decision-making and contribution;
- detailed application forms with open-ended questions about specific learning related to the skills, knowledge and competencies required for the vacancies under consideration;
- identification check;
- electoral register check;
- credit reference agency check (especially appropriate for positions in the financial services sector);
- confirmation of previous employment with HM Revenue and Customs or through the Department of Work and Pensions;
- Criminal Records Bureau check;
- Companies House check (for directors);
- fraud prevention check, including Cifas staff fraud database check (to prevent an employer unwittingly employing people previously dismissed for fraud somewhere else). Cifas is a not-for-profit fraud prevention service.

## Offering employment

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The final stage in the selection procedure is to confirm the offer of employment after satisfactory references have been obtained, and the applicant has passed the medical examination required for pension and life assurance purposes or because a certain standard of physical fitness is required for the work. The contract of employment should also be prepared at this stage.

## Following up

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It is essential to follow up newly engaged employees to ensure that they have settled in and to check on how well they are doing. If there are any problems it is much better to identify them at an early stage rather than allowing them to fester.

Following up is also important as a means of checking on the selection procedure. If by any chance a mistake has been made, it is useful to find out how it happened so that the procedure can be improved. Misfits can be attributed to a number of causes; for example: inadequate person specification, poor sourcing of candidates, weak advertising, poor interviewing techniques, inappropriate or invalidated tests, or prejudice on the part of the selector.

## Dealing with recruitment problems

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Every experienced HR professional who is responsible for recruitment and selection will occasionally come across a vacancy that is particularly difficult to fill. In this situation any compromise that involves appointing someone who does not meet the specification must be avoided. To deal with the problem constructively it is necessary to take the following actions:

- Ensure that all the possible sources of candidates have been used.
- Consider any ways in which the advertisement or website entry could be made more attractive.
- Check that the person specification is realistic – that the requirements have not been overstated.
- Consider whether it might be necessary to improve the package offered to candidates – check market rates to ensure that the level of pay and benefits are competitive.
- In discussion with the line manager, examine the possibility of reshaping the role to increase its attractiveness.
- If the worse comes to the worst, discuss with the manager alternative ways of carrying out the work with existing staff.



## CASE STUDIES

### Recruitment assessment processes at Embarq

Embarq is the largest independent local telecoms provider in the United States. It suffered catastrophic rates of staff turnover in its call centres; then a new assessment process designed by PreVisor reduced turnover from 33.5 per cent in the first 90 days to 12.5 per cent.

The new process begins with an online screening tool that identifies characteristics and motivations that define long-term success in the roles, such as 'customer

focus' and 'persistence'. There follows a behaviour-based structured interview and a sales-based role-play exercise. This exercise takes place over the phone, which tests candidates in the most realistic way possible, and is more convenient and cost-effective.

Sales have since increased by 24 per cent, and customer service has also improved.

### Recruitment and retention at Paul UK

Paul UK operates a chain of 22 retail patisserie and bakery shops employing 400 people. Its staff turnover rate of 168 per cent was below the sector's average but still too high. The steps taken to overcome this problem were as follows:

- a robust recruitment process was introduced using branded application forms and centralized recruiting;
- role descriptions and skills specifications were created for posts;
- a competency-based approach to recruitment was introduced – the competencies are closely linked to the company's values and defined the behaviours and attitudes required;
- recruitment literature was professionally designed by an agency;
- an employer brand was built – the promotional leaflet highlights the benefits of working for the company;
- an employee referral scheme was introduced (helped by the employer brand);
- a resource centre for recruitment and training was established;
- a rolling induction training programme was introduced;
- a career progression framework was developed.

The outcome was that within two years staff turnover had dropped by 30 per cent and retention rates had doubled.

## Key learning points: Recruitment and selection

### Define requirements

Requirements are set out in the form of job descriptions or role profiles and person specifications. These provide the information required to draft advertisements, post vacancies on the internet, brief agencies or recruitment consultants and assess candidates by means of interviews and selection tests.

### Analyse recruitment strengths and weaknesses

The analysis should cover such matters as the national or local reputation of the organization, pay, employee benefits and working conditions, the intrinsic interest of the job, security of employment, opportunities for education and training, career prospects, and the location of the office or plant.

### Analyse the requirement

- Establish how many jobs have to be filled and by when.
- Set out information on responsibilities and competency requirements.
- Consider where suitable candidates are likely to come from.
- Define the terms and conditions of the job (pay and benefits).
- Consider what is likely to attract good candidates.

### Identify sources of candidates

Initially, consideration should be given to internal candidates. An attempt can be made to persuade former employees to return to the organization or obtain suggestions from existing employees (referrals). If these approaches do not work, the main sources of candidates are online recruiting, advertising, agencies and jobcentres, consultants, recruitment process outsourcing providers and direct approaches to educational establishments.

### Selection methods

The aim is to assess the suitability of candidates by predicting the extent to which they will be able to carry

out a role successfully. It involves deciding on the degree to which the characteristics of applicants match the person specification and using this assessment to make a choice between candidates. The interview is the most familiar method of selection. The aim is to elicit information about candidates that will enable a prediction to be made about how well they will do the job and thus lead to a selection decision.

### Structured interviews

A structured interview is one based on a defined framework. Within the framework there may be a set of predetermined questions. All candidates are asked the same questions and the answers may be scored through a rating system.

### Competency-based interviews

In its purest form, a competency-based interview is a structured interview that focuses on the required behavioural competencies as set out in the person specification. The questions will be designed to establish the typical behaviour of a candidate in work situations.

### Selection tests

Selection tests are used to provide valid and reliable evidence of levels of abilities, intelligence, personality characteristics, aptitudes and attainments.

### Choice of selection methods

There is a choice between the selection methods. The most important criterion is the predictive validity of the method or combination of methods. Schmidt and Hunter (1998) found that the best results were obtained by combining intelligence tests with structured interviews.

### References and offers

After the interviewing and testing procedure has been completed, a provisional offer by telephone or in writing can be made. This is normally 'subject to satisfactory references'. It is essential to check the information provided by candidates on qualifications and their work experience.



## Questions

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- 1 What is the difference between recruitment and selection?
- 2 What are the main stages of recruitment and selection?
- 3 What is a person specification?
- 4 How should recruitment strengths and weaknesses be analysed?
- 5 What are the main sources of candidates?
- 6 What is a structured interview?
- 7 What are the main types of selection tests?
- 8 What are the main criteria for a good test?
- 9 How should tests be used in a selection procedure?

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# 19

## Resourcing practice

### KEY CONCEPTS AND TERMS

Absence management	Half-life index
The Bradford factor	Length of service analysis
Employee turnover	Stability index
Employee turnover index	Survival rate
Employer of choice	

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

On completing this chapter you should be able to define these key concepts. You should also know about:

- Employee value propositions
- Creating an employer brand
- Measuring employee turnover
- Estimating the cost of employee turnover
- Retention planning
- Risk of leaving analysis
- Absence management
- Flexibility planning

### Introduction

This chapter deals with general resourcing practices covering developing an employee value proposition, creating an employer brand, analysing employee turnover, tackling retention problems, managing absence management, introducing people to the organization and releasing them from it.

### Employee value proposition

An organization's employee value proposition consists of what it offers to prospective or existing employees that they will value and that will persuade them to join or remain with the business. It will include remuneration – which is important but can be over-emphasized compared with non-financial factors.

The latter may be crucial in attracting and retaining people and include the attractiveness of the organization, the degree to which it acts responsibly, respects diversity and inclusion, work–life balance and opportunities for personal and professional growth. The aim is to become ‘an employer of choice’, a firm that people want to work for and stay with. The conclusions of Purcell *et al* (2003) on the basis of their research were as follows.

### Source review

On being an employer of choice –  
Purcell *et al* (2003)

What seems to be happening is that successful firms are able to meet people’s needs both for a good job and to work ‘in a great place’. They create good work and a conducive working environment. In this way they become an ‘employer of choice’. People will want to work there because their individual needs are met – for a good job with prospects linked to training, appraisal and working with a good boss who listens and gives some autonomy but helps with coaching and guidance.

To develop an employee value proposition it is necessary first to analyse what the organization has to offer people by reference to:

- its reputation as a business and as an employer;
- its working environment;
- its location;
- the career opportunities available;
- the scope that it provides for learning new skills;
- the terms and conditions of employment it offers.

The next step is to decide how this proposition can be conveyed to potential applicants on the organization’s website or by other means.

## Employer brand

The employee value proposition can be expressed as an employer brand – the image presented by an organization as a good employer. An employer brand was defined by Walker (2007: 44) as ‘a set of attributes and qualities – often intangible – that make an organization distinctive, promise a particular kind of employment experience and appeal to people who will thrive and perform their best in its culture’. Employer branding is the creation of a brand image of the organization for prospective employees.

### Creating an employer brand

- Analyse what the best candidates need and want and take this into account in deciding what should be offered and how it should be offered.
- Establish how far the core values of the organization support the creation of an attractive brand and ensure that these are incorporated in the presentation of the brand, as long as they are ‘values in use’ (lived by members of the organization) rather than simply espoused.
- Define the features of the brand on the basis of an examination and review of each of the areas that affect people’s perceptions of the organization as ‘a great place to work’ – the way people are treated, the provision of a fair deal, opportunities for growth, work–life balance, leadership, the quality of management, involvement with colleagues and how and why the organization is successful.
- Benchmark the approaches of other organizations (the *Sunday Times* list of the 100 best companies to work for is useful) to obtain ideas about what can be done to enhance the brand.
- Be honest and realistic.

## CASE STUDY

### Developing an employer brand at the Ordnance Survey

The Ordnance Survey was finding it difficult to recruit technological and commercial staff of the right calibre and it was therefore decided to deal with the problem by conducting an employer branding exercise.

#### Objectives

The objectives of the exercise were to:

- improve external perceptions of Ordnance Survey as an employer;
- get recruitment campaigns 'right first time';
- reduce recruitment costs;
- attract and recruit high-quality people, especially in technology and commercial areas;
- unlock people's potential to deliver great performance;
- match the employee experience to the organization's strong corporate brand.

#### The research programme

The employee-research company ORC was engaged to conduct internal and external research and consultation. The external research covered four other large employers

with which Ordnance Survey compared well. It also included in-depth interviews with recruitment consultants, short-service leavers and those who had been offered a post but not taken it up. Internal research took the form of focus groups, interviews and consultation with recent joiners. The key messages from this external and internal research were fed into the brand development workshop.

#### The brand development workshop

The workshop consisted of a cross-section of staff who discussed the attributes of Ordnance Survey and the ways in which it presented them. Action groups met to consider particular aspects of the organization and its policies and how the brand could be developed. The focus was on the 'touch points' at which existing and potential employees engaged with the organization. The aim was to create something compelling and achievable with regard to each of these key elements. A leadership development programme was conducted that included looking at the employer brand.

#### Outcome

The employer brand created by this process was used as a centre point to inform and shape the people strategy and is aligned to the business strategy.

## Employee turnover

Employee turnover (sometimes known as 'labour turnover', 'wastage' or 'attrition') is the rate at which people leave an organization. It can be disruptive and costly. The CIPD (2013) survey of resourcing and talent planning found that the average rate of turnover (the number leaving as a percentage of the number employed) in the UK was 11.9 per cent.

It is necessary to measure employee turnover and calculate its costs in order to forecast future losses

for planning purposes and to identify the reasons that people leave the organization. Plans can then be made to attack the problems causing unnecessary turnover and to reduce costs. There are a number of different methods of measuring turnover, as outlined below.

### Employee turnover index

The employee turnover index as set out below (sometimes referred to as the employee or labour

wastage index) is the traditional formula for measuring turnover:

$$\frac{\text{Number of leavers in a specified period (usually 1 year)}}{\text{Average number of employees during the same period}} \times 100$$

This method is in common use because it is easy to calculate and to understand. It is a simple matter to work out that, if last year 30 out of an average force of 150 employees left (20 per cent turnover) and his trend continues, then the company will have to recruit 108 employees during the following year to increase and to hold the workforce at 200 in that year (50 extra employees, plus 40 to replace the 20 per cent wastage of the average 200 employees employed, plus 18 to replace wastage of the 90 recruits).

This formula is simple, but it can be misleading. The problem is that the percentage may be inflated by the high turnover of a relatively small proportion of the workforce, especially in times of heavy recruitment. Thus, a company employing 1,000 people might have had an annual wastage rate of 20 per cent, meaning that 200 jobs had become vacant during the year. But this could have been spread throughout the company, covering all occupations and long- as well as short-service employees. Alternatively, it could have been restricted to a small sector of the workforce – only 20 jobs might have been affected although each of these had to be filled 10 times during the year. These are different situations and unless they are understood inaccurate forecasts would be made of future requirements and inappropriate actions would be taken to deal with the problem. The turnover index is also suspect if the average number of employees upon which the percentage is based is unrepresentative of recent trends because of considerable increases or decreases during the period in the numbers employed.

### Stability index

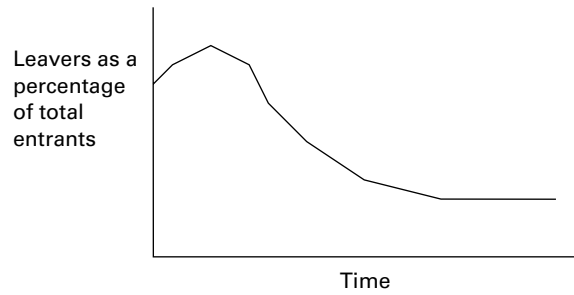
The stability index is considered by many to be an improvement on the turnover index. The formula is:

$$\frac{\text{Number with 1 year's service or more}}{\text{Number employed 1 year ago}} \times 100$$

### Survival rate

The survival rate is the proportion of employees who are engaged within a certain period who

**FIGURE 19.1** A survival curve



remain with the organization after so many months or years of service. Thus, an analysis of a cohort of 20 trainees who have completed their training might show that after two years 10 of the original trainees were still with the company, a survival rate of 50 per cent. The distribution of losses for each entry group, or cohort, can be plotted in the form of a survival curve, as shown in Figure 19.1.

The basic shape of this curve has been found to be similar in many situations, although the peak of the curve may occur further along the time scale and/or may be lower when it relates to more highly skilled or trained entry cohorts. An example of a survival rate analysis is shown in Table 19.1. This indicates that half the number of recruits in any one year may be lost over the next five years, unless something can be done about the factors causing wastage.

The survival rate is useful as a means of tracking a 'cohort' of recruits (eg graduates) to assess the effectiveness of recruitment and retention policies. But it cannot be used as a means of measuring the turnover rates of whole populations in order to allow for future wastage when making supply forecasts.

### Half-life index

A simpler concept derived from survival rate analysis is that of the half-life index, which is defined as the time taken for a group or cohort of starters to reduce to half its original size through the wastage process (five years in the above example). Comparisons can then be made for successive entry years or between different groups of employees to show where action may have to be taken to counter undesirable wastage trends.

**TABLE 19.1** A survival rate analysis

Entry cohort	Original number	Number surviving to end of year after engagement				
		Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
A	40	35	28	26	22	20
B	32	25	24	19	18	16
C	48	39	33	30	27	24
D	38	32	27	24	22	19
E	42	36	30	26	23	21
Total	200	167	142	125	112	100
Average survival rate	100%	83%	71%	62%	56%	50%

### **Leavers' length of service analysis**

The information from measures of stability can be enhanced if an analysis is also made of the average length of service of people who leave, as in Figure 19.2. This analysis is still fairly crude, because it deals only with those who leave. A more refined analysis would compare for each designated length of service the numbers leaving with the numbers employed. If, in the example shown, the total number employed with less than three months' service was 80 and the total with more than five years' service was 80, the proportion of leavers in each category would be, respectively, 35 per cent and 14 per cent – more revealing figures.

### **Choice of measurement**

It is difficult to avoid using the conventional employee (labour) turnover index as the easiest and most familiar of all methods of measurement. It provides the simplest basis for assessing future levels of supply by allowing for wastage. But it can usefully be supplemented with some measure of stability (eg survival rate or the length of service of leavers) to identify recruitment or retention problems.

### **The cost of employee turnover**

The cost of employee turnover can be considerable. The CIPD 2008 survey established that the average cost per employee was £5,800, rising to £20,000 for senior managers or directors. Cost estimates are useful as means of backing up a business case for taking action to reduce turnover. The following factors should be considered when calculating costs:

- direct cost of recruiting replacements (advertising, interviewing, testing, etc);
- direct cost of introducing replacements (induction cost);
- direct cost of training replacements in necessary skills;
- leaving costs – payroll and HR administration;
- opportunity cost of time spent by HR and line managers in recruitment, induction and training;
- loss of output from those leaving before they are replaced;
- loss of output because of delays in obtaining replacements;
- loss of output while new starters are on their learning curves acquiring the necessary knowledge and skills.

**FIGURE 19.2** Leavers' length of service analysis

Occupation	Leavers by length of service						Total number leaving	Average number employed	Index of employee turnover %
	Less than 3 months	3–6 months	6 months–1 year	1–2 years	3–5 years	5 or more years			
A	5	4	3	3	2	3	20	220	9
B	15	12	10	6	3	4	50	250	20
C	8	6	5	4	3	4	30	100	30
Totals	28	22	18	13	8	11	100	570	18

Research by Phillips (1990) found that the 'visible' (ie direct) costs of recruitment accounted for only 10 to 15 per cent of total costs. By far the highest costs were associated with the inefficiencies arising while the post was vacant (33 per cent) and the inefficiency of new workers (32 per cent). On average, 12.5 months were required for executives to be comfortable in a new position and 13.5 months were required for a new employee to achieve maximum efficiency.

## Retention planning

The turnover of key employees can have a disproportionate impact on the business. The people that organizations wish to retain are often the ones most likely to leave. It was claimed by Reed (2001) that every worker is five minutes away from handing in his or her notice, and 150 working hours away from walking out of the door to a better offer. There is no such thing as a job for life and today's workers have few qualms about leaving employers. Action is required to retain talented people, but there are limits to what any organization can do. It is also necessary to encourage higher levels of contribution from existing talent and to value them accordingly.

### Factors affecting retention

Retention strategies should be based on an understanding of the factors that affect whether or not employees leave or stay. For early-career employees (30 years old and under) career advancement is significant. For mid-career employees (age 31–50) the ability to manage their careers and satisfaction from their work are important. Late-career employees (aged over 50) will be more interested in security. It is also the case that a younger workforce will change jobs and employers more often than an older workforce, and workforces with a lot of part-timers are less stable than those with predominately full-time staff. The other factors that affect retention are:

- company image;
- the effectiveness of recruitment, selection and deployment (fitting people into jobs that suit them);
- leadership – 'employees join companies and leave managers';



- learning and career opportunities;
- performance recognition and rewards.

A study by Holbeche (1998) of high-flyers found that the factors that aided the retention and motivation of high performers included providing challenge and achievement opportunities (eg assignments), mentors, realistic self-assessment and feedback.

### **Basis of the retention strategy**

A retention strategy takes into account the retention issues the organization is facing and sets out ways in which these issues can be dealt with. This may mean accepting the following argument offered by Cappelli (2000: 104):

To adopt the new strategy you have to accept the new reality: the market, not your company, will ultimately determine the movement of your employees. Yes, you can make your organization as pleasant and rewarding a place in which to work in as possible – you can fix problems that might push people towards the exits. But you can't counter the pull of the market; you can't shield your people from attractive opportunities and aggressive recruiters. The old goal of HR – to minimize overall employee turnover – needs to be replaced by a new goal: to influence who leaves and when.

The strategy should be based on an analysis of the risks of leaving.

### **Risk of leaving analysis**

As proposed by Bevan *et al* (1997) risk analysis can be used to quantify the seriousness of losing key people or of key posts becoming vacant. Risk analysis can be carried out by initially identifying potential risk areas – the key people who may leave and, for each of them, as individuals or groups, estimate:

- the likelihood of this occurring;
- how serious the effects of a loss would be on the business;
- the ease with which a replacement could be made and the replacement costs.

Each of the estimates could be expressed on a scale, say: very high, high, medium, low, very low. An

overview of the ratings under each heading could then indicate where action may need to be taken to retain key people or groups of people.

The analysis should provide information on reasons for leaving, for example:

- more pay;
- better prospects (career move);
- more security;
- more opportunity to develop skills;
- unable to cope with job;
- better working conditions;
- poor relationships with manager/team leader;
- poor relationships with colleagues;
- bullying or harassment;
- personal – pregnancy, illness, moving away from area, etc.

Information on the reasons for leaving, and therefore where action needs to be taken, can be provided by exit interviews, but they are fallible. More reliance can be placed on the results of attitude or opinion surveys to identify areas of dissatisfaction. The retention plan should propose actions that would focus on each of the areas in which there is dissatisfaction or lack of commitment.

### **Areas for action**

Depending on the outcome of the risk and reasons for leaving analyses the possible actions that can be taken are:

- Ensure that selection and promotion procedures match the capacities of individuals to the demands of the work they have to do. Rapid turnover can result simply from poor selection or promotion decisions.
- Reduce the losses of people who cannot adjust to their new job – the 'induction crisis' – by giving them proper training and support when they join the organization.
- Design jobs to maximize skill variety, task significance, autonomy, control over work and feedback, and ensure that they provide opportunities for learning and growth. Some roles can be 'customized' to meet the needs of particular individuals.

- Deal with uncompetitive, inequitable or unfair pay systems. But as Cappelli (2000) pointed out, there is a limit to the extent to which people can be bribed to stay.
- Encourage the development of social ties within the company. In the words of Cappelli (2000: 108), ‘loyalty to companies may be disappearing but loyalty to colleagues is not’.
- Take steps to improve work–life balance by developing policies, including flexible working, that recognize the needs of employees outside work.
- Eliminate as far as possible unpleasant working conditions or the imposition of too much stress on employees.
- Select, brief and train managers and team leaders so that they appreciate the positive contribution they can make to improving retention by the ways in which they lead their teams. Bear in mind that people often leave their managers rather than their organization.

Ensure that policies for controlling bullying and harassment are in place and are applied.

## Absence management

Absence or attendance management is the development and application of policies and procedures designed to reduce levels of absenteeism. The CIPD (2012) report on absence management revealed that:

- the average length of employee absence was 6.8 days per employee per year;
- larger organizations have higher average levels of absence than smaller organizations;
- on average, two-thirds of working time lost to absence is accounted for by short-term absences of up to seven days; one-fifth is attributed to long-term absences;
- the average cost of absence was £600 per employee per year.

Something needs to be done about it. This means understanding the causes of absence, adopting comprehensive absence management (or, more positively,

attendance management) policies, measuring absence and implementing procedures for the management of short- and long-term absence.

## Causes of absence

The causes of absence have been analysed by Huczynski and Fitzpatrick (1989) under three headings: job situation factors, personal factors and attendance factors.

### Job situation factors

- Job scope – a high degree of task repetitiveness is associated with absenteeism, although job satisfaction itself is a contributory rather than a primary cause of absence.
- Stress – it is estimated that 40 million working days are lost each year in the UK through stress. This can be attributed to work load, poor working conditions, shift work, role ambiguity or conflict, relationships and organizational climate.
- Frequent job transfers increase absenteeism.
- Management style – the quality of management, especially that of immediate supervisors, affects the level of absenteeism.
- Physical working conditions.
- Work group size – the larger the organization the higher the absence rate.

### Personal factors

- Employee values – for some workers, doing less work for the same reward improves the deal made with the employer (the effort-reward bargain). The following positive outcomes of absence have been shown by research to be particularly important to employees: break from routine, leisure time, dealing with personal business and a break from co-workers.
- Age – younger employees are more frequently absent than older ones.
- Personality – some people are absence-prone (studies have noted that between 5 and 10 per cent of workers account for about half of the total absence, while a few are never absent at all).

## Attendance factors

- Reward systems – as pay increases attendance improves.
- Sick-pay schemes may increase absenteeism.
- Work group norms can exert pressure for or against attendance.

## Absence policies

Absence policies should cover:

- methods of measuring absence;
- setting targets for the level of absence;
- deciding on the level of short-term absence that would trigger action, possibly using the Bradford Factor, as explained below;
- the circumstances in which disciplinary action might be taken;
- what employees must do if they are unable to attend work;
- sick-pay arrangements;
- provisions for the reduction and control of absence such as return-to-work interviews;
- other steps that can be taken to reduce absence, such as flexible working patterns.

The skills required to manage absenteeism are examined in Chapter 57.

## Recording and measuring absence

As a basis for action, absence levels need to be recorded so that they can be measured and monitored against targets for maintaining absence at a certain level, or reducing absenteeism.

An HR information system (HRIS) can provide the best means of recording absenteeism. If a self-service approach is in place, managers and team leaders have direct access to absence records showing the incidence of absenteeism (number and lengths of absence). This data can be consolidated for use by HR in compiling absence statistics and monitoring against targets. The most common measurement is the percentage of time available that has been lost due to absence.

## The Bradford Factor

The Bradford Factor provides a useful measure. This index identifies persistent short-term absence by measuring the number and duration of spells of absence. Its exact origin is a mystery, although IDS (2007) believes that it has some connection with Bradford University's School of Management. It is calculated using the formula  $S \times S \times D = \text{Bradford points score}$ , where  $S$  is the number of occasions of absence in the last 52 weeks and  $D$  is the total number of days' absence in the last 52 weeks. Thus, for employees with a total of 14 days' absence in a 52-week period, the Bradford score can vary enormously depending on the number of occasions involved. For example:

one absence of 14 days is 14 points:  $1 \times 1 \times 14$

seven absences of two days each is 686 points:  
 $7 \times 7 \times 14$

14 absences of one day each is 2,744 points:  
 $14 \times 14 \times 14$

The Bradford index can be used as a trigger to initiate action. It is typically set at 250 points so that action would be initiated if, for example, there had been 10 days absence over five spells.

## Controlling short-term absence

Short-term absence can be controlled by the following:

- return-to-work interviews conducted by line managers, which can identify problems at an early stage and provide an opportunity for a discussion on ways of reducing absence;
- use of trigger mechanisms such as the Bradford Factor to review attendance;
- invoking disciplinary procedures for unacceptable absence levels;
- training line managers in methods of controlling absence, including return-to-work interviews;
- extending the scope for flexible working.

## Managing long-term absence

The best way to manage long-term absence is to keep in contact with employees by letter, telephone or visits to discuss the situation and, where possible, plan the return to work. This plan may include modified working hours or a modified role for a period.

## CASE STUDIES

### Controlling sickness absence at Wincanton

Distribution company Wincanton had a problem controlling sickness absence because its large workforce is spread over 285 sites. The solution was to outsource absence management to Active Health Partners, which operates a call centre staffed by nurses – employees must report their absences and can receive medical advice. An online absence recording system is also provided, which provides line managers with information on absences and access to absence statistics.

As soon as an employee calls Active Health Partners an e-mail or text is sent to the employee's line manager via an automated system, informing him or her of the absence and the reason for it and giving an approximate return-to-work

date. The system also provides various triggers to line managers. For example, once an employee has been away for more than 15 days, the manager receives a message indicating that contact needs to be made. Managers are expected to conduct return-to-work interviews and have more formal discussions when an absence exceeds 15 days. They will explore why there has been this amount of time off, if there is an underlying health issue, if an employee should be referred to Occupational Health and if the disciplinary process should be started.

As a result, Wincanton reduced sickness absence by 10,000 days in six months.

### Absence management at Westminster City Council

#### Monitoring

Sickness absence is recorded by line managers on the intranet system.

#### Return-to-work interviews

A return-to-work interview is held between the manager and the employee after any length of absence, even one day, although this may only take a couple of minutes. Employees are required to complete a self-certification/return to work form. Employees who have been absent for eight days or more are informed that they will be referred to Occupational Health.

#### Absence trigger points

An employee who has had more than seven days' sickness absence in any rolling 365-day period is dealt with through the 'enhanced sickness management procedure'. If sickness absence exceeds 20 days, the long-term sickness procedure is applied.

#### The enhanced sickness management procedure

- Line managers complete a referral form that is forwarded to Occupational Health staff who decide to

conduct a face-to-face consultation or make a desktop assessment – and in either case provide any advice necessary to the manager or the individual and send a report to the manager and HR.

- Within 10 days of receiving the report the manager meets the employee to review the sickness record, consider any further explanations for the absence, discuss the report from Occupational Health and agree action to improve attendance and minimize sickness.
- As necessary, especially in cases of disability, Occupational Health will discuss with the manager and the employee any reasonable adaptations to the work environment that may be helpful.

#### Long-term sickness absence management

- Every four weeks managers review cases of long-term absence with the Occupational Health service and also contact the employee.
- If an employee has been off work the managers and Occupational Health hold a case conference to assess the situation. The employee is required to meet Occupational Health if this is possible.

- The manager makes an assessment following the case conference covering the nature and likely length of the illness, the impact of the absence on the work and how any impact will be managed.
- Following this assessment a face-to-face meeting is held with the employee to ensure that other relevant factors and personal circumstances are taken into account.
- A sickness absence hearing may be called as a result of this meeting and the case conference.

### Employee assistance programme

An employee assistance programme (EAP) is available through an external provider. Employees can raise problems with helpline staff, and face-to-face counselling can be made available.

## Induction

Induction is the process of receiving and welcoming employees when they first join a company and giving them the basic information they need to settle down quickly and happily and start work. The aims are to:

- smooth the preliminary stages when everything is likely to be strange and unfamiliar to the starter;
- establish quickly a favourable attitude to the organization in the mind of new employees so that they are more likely to stay;
- obtain effective output from the new employee in the shortest possible time;
- reduce the likelihood of the employee leaving quickly.

### Introduction to the organization

New starters will be concerned about who they are going to work for (their immediate manager or team leader), who they are going to work with, what work they are going to do on their first day and the geographical layout of their place of work (location of entrances, exits, lavatories, restrooms and the canteen).

Some of this information may be provided by a member of the HR department, or an assistant in the new employee's place of work. But the most important source of information is the immediate manager, supervisor or team leader.

### Departmental induction

The departmental induction programme should, wherever possible, start with the departmental manager, not the immediate team leader. The manager may give only a general welcome and a brief description of the work of the department before handing over new employees to their team leaders for the more detailed induction. But it is important for the manager to be involved at this stage so that he or she is not seen as a remote figure by the new employee. At least this means that the starter will not be simply a name or a number to the manager. The detailed induction in the workplace is probably best carried out by the immediate team leader.

### Induction to the workplace

The team leader should introduce new starters to their fellow team members. It is best to get one member of the team to act as a guide or 'starter's friend'. There is much to be said for these initial guides being people who have not been long with the organization. As relative newcomers they are likely to remember all the small points that were a source of worry to them when they started work, and so help new employees to settle in quickly.

### On-the-job induction training

Most new starters other than those on formal training schemes will learn on-the-job, although this may be supplemented with special off-the-job courses to develop particular skills or knowledge. But on-the-job training can be haphazard, inefficient

and wasteful. A planned, systematic approach is desirable. This can incorporate an assessment of what the new starter needs to learn, the use of designated and trained colleagues to act as guides and mentors, and coaching by team leaders or specially appointed and trained departmental trainers.

These on-the-job arrangements can be supplemented by self-managed learning arrangements, offering access to flexible learning packages or providing advice on learning opportunities.

## Release from the organization

One of the most demanding areas of human resource management in organizations is that of handling arrangements for releasing people through redundancy, dismissal or retirement.

### Redundancy

Redundancy takes place when the organization as a whole is reducing the number of employees (downsizing), when structural changes are being made following mergers and acquisitions, and when individual jobs are no longer needed. If, unfortunately, redundancy has to take place, it is necessary to plan ahead – seeking and implementing methods of avoiding redundancy as far as possible, making arrangements for voluntary redundancy and helping people to find jobs (outplacement). HR usually has the onerous responsibility of handling the redundancy itself.

### Planning ahead

Planning ahead means that future reductions in people needs are anticipated and steps are taken to minimize compulsory redundancies. This can be done by freezing recruitment and allowing the normal flow of leavers (natural wastage) to reduce or even eliminate the need for redundancy, calling in outsourced work, reducing or eliminating overtime, reducing the number of part-timers and temporary staff, work-sharing (two people splitting one job between them) or, more reluctantly, reduction in working hours or temporary layoffs.

## Voluntary redundancy

Asking for volunteers – with a suitable payoff – is another way of reducing compulsory redundancies. The disadvantage is that the wrong people might go, ie the good workers who find it easy to get other work. It is sometimes useful to offer such people a special loyalty bonus if they stay on.

## Outplacement

Outplacement is about helping redundant employees to find other work and to cope with the problems they face. It can take place through specialized outplacement consultants and counselling or by setting up ‘job shops’.

*Outplacement consultants* provide counselling on how people can make the best use of what they can offer to other employers. They can be helped to identify their strengths and achievements, the type of job they are qualified to do and the sort of employer that is most likely to want people with their experience and qualifications. Assistance can be provided in preparing what is sometimes called an ‘achievement CV’, which spells out what the individual has been successful in and prompts the thought in the employer’s mind: ‘What the individual has done for them he or she can do for us.’

*Counselling* involves help and advice in identifying possible moves, preparing CVs and how to make the best impression in interviews. Counselling may be provided by HR staff, but there is much to be said for using specialized outplacement consultants.

Help may be given on an individual basis through counselling or outplacement consultants, but in larger scale redundancies job shops can be set up. The staff of the job shop, who may be from HR or are sometimes members of a specialized outplacement consultancy, scour the travel-to-work area seeking job opportunities, match people to jobs and arrange interviews.

## Dismissal

Dismissal takes place when an employer terminates the employment of someone with or without notice. A contract can be terminated as a result of demotion or transfer, as well as dismissal. People can be ‘constructively dismissed’ if they resign because of their employer’s unreasonable behaviour.

## Approach to dismissal

Dismissals should be handled in accordance with the following principles of natural justice:

- Individuals should know the standards of performance they are expected to meet and the rules to which they are expected to conform.
- They should be given a clear indication of where they are failing or what rules they have broken.
- Except in cases of gross misconduct, they should be given an opportunity to improve before disciplinary action is taken.

## Disciplinary procedure

These principles should form the basis of a disciplinary procedure, which is staged as follows:

- 1 An informal discussion on the problem.
- 2 A first written warning.
- 3 A final written warning.
- 4 Dismissal or action short of dismissal such as loss of pay or demotion.

Employees should be reminded of their right to be accompanied by a colleague or employee representative in disciplinary hearings. (An example of a full disciplinary procedure incorporating the stages listed above is given in Chapter 41.)

Managers and team leaders should be made aware of the procedure and told what authority they have to take action. It is advisable to have all written warnings and any final action approved by a higher authority. In cases of gross misconduct, managers and team leaders should be given the right to suspend if higher authority is not available, but not to dismiss. The importance of obtaining and recording the facts should be emphasized. Managers should always have a colleague with them when issuing a final warning and should make a note to file of what was said on the spot.

## Retirement

Retirement is a major change and should be prepared for. Retirement policies need to specify:

- when people are due to retire;
- the circumstances, if any, in which they can work beyond their normal retirement date;
- the provision of pre-retirement training on such matters as finance, insurance, state pension rights and other benefits, health, working either for money or for a voluntary organization, and sources of advice and help;
- the provision of advice to people about to retire.



## Key learning points: Resourcing practice

### Employee value proposition

An organization's employee value proposition consists of what it offers to prospective or existing employees that they will value and that will persuade them to join or remain with the business. It can be developed by analysing everything that the organization has to offer potential employees and then conveying that offer to them on the organization's website or by other means.

### Employer brand

The employee value proposition can be expressed as an employer brand – the image presented by an organization as a good employer. To create an employer brand:

- analyse what the best candidates need and want;
- establish how far the core values of the organization support the creation of an attractive brand;
- define the features of the brand on the basis of an examination and review of each of the areas that affect the perceptions of people about the organization as 'a great place to work';
- benchmark the approaches of other organizations;
- be honest and realistic.

### Measuring employee turnover

It is necessary to measure employee turnover and calculate its costs in order to forecast future losses for planning purposes and to identify the reasons that people leave the organization. Plans can then be made to attack the problems causing unnecessary turnover and to reduce costs. The methods available are: employee turnover index, half-life index, length of service analysis, stability index and survival rate.

### Estimating the cost of employee turnover:

- direct cost of recruiting replacements;
- direct cost of introducing replacements;
- direct cost of training replacements;
- leaving costs;
- opportunity cost of time spent by HR and line managers in recruitment, etc;
- loss of output.

### Retention planning

Retention strategies should be based on an understanding of the factors that affect whether or not employees leave or stay.

### Risk of leaving analysis:

- more pay;
- better prospects (career move);
- more security;
- more opportunity to develop skills;
- unable to cope with job;
- better working conditions;
- poor relationships with manager/team leader;
- poor relationships with colleagues;
- bullying or harassment;
- personal – pregnancy, illness, moving away from area, etc.

### Absence policies:

- methods of measuring absence;
- setting targets for the level of absence;
- deciding on the level of short-term absence that would trigger action, possibly using the Bradford Factor;
- the circumstances in which disciplinary action might be taken;
- what employees must do if they are unable to attend work;
- sick-pay arrangements;
- provisions for the reduction and control of absence such as return-to-work interviews;
- other steps that can be taken to reduce absence such as flexible working patterns.

### Induction

Induction is the process of receiving and welcoming employees when they first join a company and giving them the basic information they need to settle down quickly and happily and start work.

### Release from the organization

One of the most demanding areas of HRM in organizations is in handling arrangements for releasing people through redundancy, dismissal or retirement.



## Questions

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- 1 What is an employee value proposition?
- 2 What is an employer brand?
- 3 What is the employee turnover index and why can it be misleading?
- 4 What factors affect employee retention?
- 5 What should absence policies cover?
- 6 What are the principles of natural justice?

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# 20

## Talent management

### KEY CONCEPTS AND TERMS

Career planning	Talent on demand policies
Portfolio career	Talent pipeline
Protean career	Talent planning
Succession planning	Talent pool
Talent	Talent relationship management
Talent management	War for talent

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

On completing this chapter you should be able to define these key concepts. You should also know about:

- The meaning of talent management
- The process of talent management
- Developing a talent management strategy
- Management succession planning
- Career management

### Introduction

The process of talent management is based on the proposition that ‘those with the best people win’. It emerged in the late 1990s when McKinsey and Company coined the phrase ‘the war for talent’. It has now been recognized as a major resourcing activity, although its elements are familiar. The fundamental concept of talent management – that it is necessary to engage in talent planning to build a talent pool by means of a talent pipeline – is a key

concern of human resource management. Talent management was defined by Tansley and Tietze (2013: 1804) as follows: ‘Talent management contains strategies and protocols for the systematic attraction, identification, development, retention and deployment of individuals with high potential who are of particular value to an organization.’ However, this definition refers to ‘individuals with high potential’ and although this may be the usual approach, some people believe that talent management covers everybody – on the grounds that all

people have talent and talent management activities should not be restricted to the favoured few.

There are many versions of talent management but in one way or another most incorporate typical HRM activities such as potential assessment, leadership and management development, succession planning and career planning. This chapter covers the meaning of talent management and talent management strategy and the processes involved. Two important aspects of talent management – management succession planning and career management – are dealt with at the end of the chapter.

## Talent management defined

Talent management is the process of ensuring that the organization has the talented people it needs to attain its business goals. It involves the strategic management of the flow of talent through an organization by creating and maintaining a talent pipeline. As suggested by Younger *et al* (2007), the approaches required include emphasizing ‘growth from within’; regarding talent development as a key element of the business strategy; being clear about the competencies and qualities that matter; maintaining well-defined career paths; taking management development, coaching and mentoring seriously; and demanding high performance.

The term ‘talent management’ may refer simply to management succession planning and/or management development activities, although this notion does not really add anything to these familiar processes except a new name – admittedly quite an evocative one. It is better to regard talent management as a more comprehensive and integrated bundle of activities, the aim of which is to create a pool of talent in an organization, bearing in mind that talent is a major corporate resource.

According to Lewis and Hackman (2006), talent management is defined in three ways: 1) as a combination of standard human resource management practices such as recruitment, selection and career development; 2) as the creation of a large talent pool, ensuring the quantitative and qualitative flow of employees through the organization (ie akin to succession or human resource planning); (3) as a good based on demographic necessity to manage talent.

Iles *et al* (2010: 127) identified three broad strands of thought about talent management:

- 1 It is not essentially different from human resource management or human resource development. Both are about getting the right people in the right job at the right time and managing the supply and development of people for the organization.
- 2 It is simply integrated HRD with a selective focus on a small ‘talented’ section of the workforce (a ‘talent pool’).
- 3 It involves organizationally focused competence development through managing and developing flows of talent through the organization. The focus is on the talent pipeline rather than the talent pool. This strand is closely related to succession and human resource planning.

The extent to which talent management is a new idea or simply a bundle of existing practices has been questioned. Iles and Preece (2010: 244–45) observed that:

Many current ideas in talent management, now often presented as novel and best practice, such as assessing potential, 360-degree feedback, assessment centres and coaching, come from the 1950s era of large stable bureaucracies and sophisticated succession planning as part of more general ‘manpower planning’.

And David Guest, cited by Warren (2006: 29), commented that:

Organizations espouse a lot of notions about talent management and give it a lot of emphasis, but in practical terms it doesn’t have a very different meaning to what most organizations have always done. Talent management is an idea that has been around a long time. It’s been relabelled.

But he also noted that the process of bringing together some old ideas gives them a freshness and that it can provide a means of integrating these practices so that a coherent approach is adopted by the use of mutually supportive practices.

Before describing the process of talent management it is necessary to answer three questions:

- 1 What is talent?
- 2 What does it mean when reference is made to ‘the war for talent’?
- 3 Who is covered by talent management programmes?

## Talent defined

Talent was defined by Michaels *et al* (2001, *xii*) as ‘the sum of a person’s abilities... his or her intrinsic gifts, skills, knowledge, experience, intelligence, judgement, attitude, character and drive. It also includes his or her ability to learn and grow.’

Talent is what people must have in order to perform well in their roles. They make a difference to organizational performance through their immediate efforts and they have the potential to make an important contribution in the future. Talent management aims to identify, obtain, keep and develop those talented people.

## The war for talent

Following the McKinsey lead, the phrase ‘the war for talent’ has become a familiar metaphor for talent management. Michaels (of McKinsey and Co) *et al* (2001) identified five imperatives that companies need to act on if they are going to win what they called the ‘war for managerial talent’:

- 1 Creating a winning employee value proposition that will make your company uniquely attractive to talent.
- 2 Moving beyond recruiting hype to build a long-term recruiting strategy.
- 3 Using job experience, coaching and mentoring to cultivate the potential in managers.
- 4 Strengthening the talent pool by investing in A players, developing B players and acting decisively on C players.
- 5 Central to this approach is a pervasive mindset – a deep conviction shared by leaders throughout the company that competitive advantage comes from having better talent at all levels.

But Pfeffer (2001: 258) expressed doubts about the war for talent concept, which he believed was the wrong metaphor for organizational success. He argued that:

Fighting the war for talent can readily create self-fulfilling prophecies that leave a large portion of the workforce demotivated or ready to quit, and produce an arrogant attitude that makes it hard to learn or listen. It can cause the company

to focus always on getting better people, mainly from outside, instead of fixing the culture and system of management practices that research has shown are consequential for performance.

He suggested (*ibid*: 249) that perceiving talent management as a ‘war’ leads to:

- an invariable emphasis on individual performance thereby damaging team work;
- a tendency to glorify the talents of those outside the company and downplay the skills and abilities of insiders;
- those labelled as less able becoming less able because they are asked to do less and given fewer resources and training;
- a de-emphasis on fixing the systemic, cultural and business issues that are invariably more important for enhancing performance;
- the development of an elitist, arrogant attitude (cf Enron).

## The people involved

There are different opinions about who should be involved. On the one hand there is the view that you must pay most attention to the best, while on the other, the view is that everyone has talent and it is not just about the favoured few. Iles and Preece (2010: 248) have identified three main perspectives:

- 1 Exclusive people – key people with high performance and/or potential irrespective of position.
- 2 Exclusive position – the right people in the strategically critical jobs.
- 3 Inclusive people – everyone in the organization is seen as actually or potentially talented, given opportunity and direction.

The first two perspectives, or a combination of the two, are the most common. Many organizations focus on the elite. For example, Microsoft UK is most concerned with its ‘A list’, the top 10 per cent of performers, regardless of role and level, whilst Six Continents targets executives below board level and high-potential individuals, as the two cadres are likely to provide their leaders of tomorrow. Huselid *et al* (2005) argued that talent management policies should concentrate on ‘A positions’. McDonnell and Collings (2011: 58) suggested that

talent management is 'primarily concerned with those who add value to the organization... those who possess the potential to have a differential impact on organizational success'. They therefore argued that talent management should focus on these individuals rather than including everyone in the organization.

According to Clarke and Winkler (2006), the inclusive people approach is comparatively rare in practice, although there have been strong advocates of it such as Buckingham and Vosburgh (2001: 18), who wrote that talent is inherent in each person: 'HR's most basic challenge is to help one particular person increase his or her performance; to be successful in the future we must restore our focus on the unique talents of each individual employee, and on the right way to transfer those talents into lasting performance.' If exclusive approaches are adopted there is a danger of talent management being perceived as an elitist process. Creating a talent pool of a limited number of individuals may alienate those who are left out. Thorne and Pellant (2007: 9) argued that: 'No organization should focus all its attention on development of only part of its human capital. What is important, however, is recognizing the needs of different individuals within its community.' The CIPD (2010a: 1) asserted that: 'Talent management and diversity need to be interlinked. Diversity should be threaded through all talent management activities and strategies to ensure that organizations make the best use of the talent and skills of all their employees in ways that are aligned to business objectives.'

The most common view seems to be that the aims of talent management are to obtain, identify and develop people with high potential. But it should not be at the expense of the development needs of people generally. The McKinsey prescription has often been misinterpreted as meaning that talent management is only about obtaining, identifying and nurturing high-flyers, ignoring the point made by Michaels *et al* (2001) that competitive advantage comes from having better talent at all levels.

A case study of a global management consultancy (Tansley and Tietze, 2013) revealed that the consultancy's approach to talent management was both inclusive (everyone is talented) and exclusive (key people were developed in ways different to those adopted for 'everyday talent'. This was expressed by the company's Talent Development Director as follows:

Talent in the Firm means two things. One I think that everybody is a talented individual. We recruit bright people intellectually. But our business also has the responsibility to help them realize that. So there is a fundamental belief that everyone is talented, and there is a belief that we do need to identify future leaders, who are going to lead key parts or have key roles in the business in the future and these would be quite senior roles. And that identifying talent to these spaces, and helping people to gravitate towards one of these roles, will be the key challenge for us.

These beliefs were put into affect by the firm through a talent progression sequence of four stages:

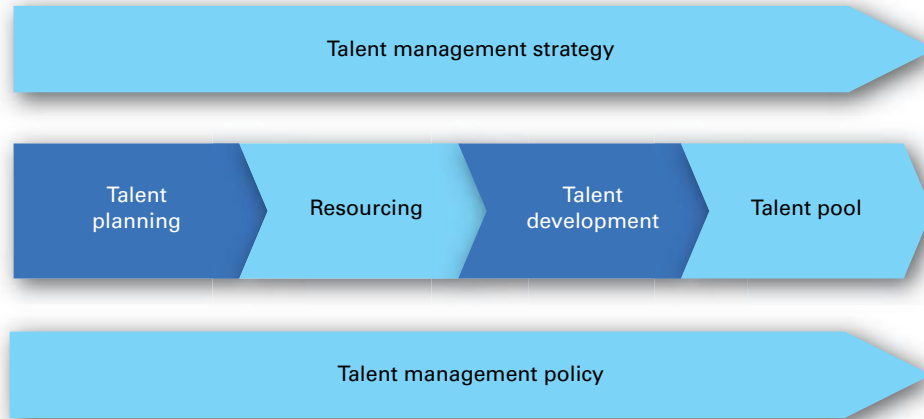
- 1 *Rising talent* – highly educated graduate recruits who are given education and training for core technical or professional roles.
- 2 *Emerging leaders* – who are given training and education for management under the guidance of sponsors or mentors.
- 3 *Next generation leaders* – who undertake leadership development programmes and may attend a corporate academy.
- 4 *Corporate next generation leaders* – who are provided with one-to-one development through coaches and mentors and briefed on corporate/governance strategy.

## The process of talent management

The process of talent management can be described as a pipeline that, as illustrated in Figure 20.1, operates within the parameters of talent strategy and policy and starts with talent planning, followed by a sequence of resourcing and talent development activities to produce a talent pool.

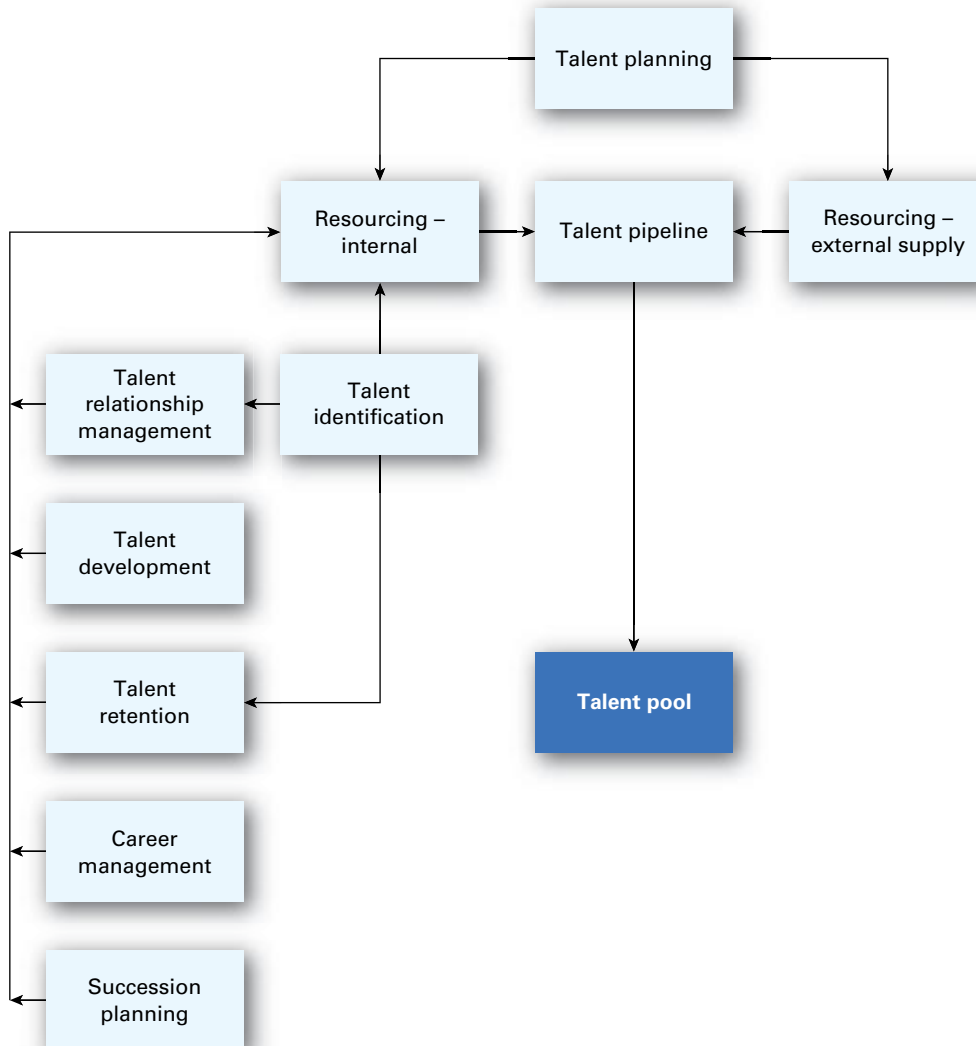
A more detailed flow chart of the process of talent management is shown in Figure 20.2.

Talent management starts with the business strategy and what it signifies in terms of the future demand for talented people. Ultimately, the aim is to develop and maintain a pool of talented people through the talent pipeline, which consists of the processes of resourcing, career planning and talent

**FIGURE 20.1** The talent management pipeline

development that maintain the flow of talent needed by the organization. Its elements are:

- *Talent planning* – the process of establishing how many and what sort of talented people are needed now and in the future. It uses the techniques of workforce planning as described in Chapter 17 and leads to the development of policies for attracting and retaining talent and for estimating future requirements as monitored by talent audits.
- *Resourcing* – the outcomes of talent planning are programmes for obtaining people from within and outside the organization (internal and external resourcing). Internally they involve the identification of talent, talent development and career management. Externally they mean the implementation of policies for attracting high-quality people.
- *Talent identification* – the use of talent audits to establish who is eligible to become part of the talent pool and to benefit from learning and development and career management programmes. The information for talent audits can be generated by a performance management system that identifies those with abilities and potential.
- *Talent relationship management* – building effective relationships with people in their roles. It is better to build on an existing relationship rather than try to create a new one when someone leaves. The aims are to recognize the value of individual employees, provide opportunities for growth, treat them fairly and achieve ‘talent engagement’, ensuring that people are committed to their work and the organization.
- *Talent development* – learning and development policies and programmes are key components of talent management. They aim to ensure that people acquire and enhance the skills and competencies they need. Policies should be formulated by reference to ‘employee success profiles’, which are described in terms of competencies and define the qualities that need to be developed. Leadership and management development programmes as described in Chapter 24 play an important part.
- *Talent retention* – the implementation of policies designed to ensure that talented people remain as engaged and committed members of the organization (retention planning is covered in Chapter 19).
- *Career management* – as discussed later in this chapter, this is concerned with the provision of opportunities for people to

**FIGURE 20.2** The talent management process

develop their abilities and their careers so that the organization has the flow of talent it needs and they can satisfy their own aspirations.

- *Management succession planning* – as far as possible, the objective is to see that the organization has the managers it requires to meet future business needs. It is considered in detail later in this chapter.

- *The talent pipeline* – the processes of resourcing, talent development and career planning that maintain the flow of talent needed to create the talent pool required by the organization.
- *The talent pool* – the resources of talent available to an organization.



## Talent management strategy

Cappelli (2008) suggested that the signs of a successful talent management strategy are that it is inclusive and that it can address and resolve any incongruity between the supply and demand of talent. He stated that too many firms have more employees than they need for available positions, or a talent shortfall, and always at the wrong times. He argued that talent management should not just be about employee development or succession planning, as many of the commonplace definitions suggest, but should focus on helping the firm attain its strategic objectives. His four principles for 'talent on demand' were:

- 1 Make and buy talent to manage the demand-side risk.
- 2 Reduce the uncertainty in talent demand.
- 3 Earn a return on investment in developing employees.
- 4 Employee interests should be balanced by creating an internal labour market that offers all the advantages of the external labour market to reduce staff turnover and to avoid the associated loss of talent and costs.

A talent management strategy consists of a view on how the processes involved in creating a talent pool should mesh together with an overall objective – to acquire and nurture talent wherever it is and wherever it is needed by using a number of interdependent policies and practices. Talent management is the notion of 'bundling' in action. The strategy should be based on definitions of what is meant by talent in terms of competencies and potential, who the talent management programme should cover, and the future talent requirements of the organization. The aims should be to:

- develop the organization as an 'employer of choice';
- plan and implement recruitment and selection programmes that ensure good-quality people are recruited who are likely to thrive in the organization and stay with it for a reasonable length of time (but not necessarily for life);
- plan and implement talent retention programmes;
- introduce reward policies that help to attract and retain high-quality staff;

- design jobs and develop roles that give people opportunities to apply and grow their skills and provide them with autonomy, interest and challenge;
- implement talent development programmes;
- provide talented staff with opportunities for career development and growth;
- recognize those with talent by rewarding excellence, enterprise and achievement;
- generate and maintain a talent pool so that 'talent on demand' is available to provide for management succession.

It can be difficult to introduce comprehensive talent management processes covering all the activities involved. A phased approach may be best. Resourcing activities take place anyhow, although the advantages of planning them on the basis of assessments of talent requirements are considerable; and it makes sense to devote energies to retaining key staff. But beyond that, the starting point in practice for an extended talent management programme could be a process of identifying people with talent through a performance management system. It would then be possible to concentrate on leadership and management development programmes. Sophisticated approaches to career planning and, possibly, succession planning could be introduced later.

## What is happening in talent management

A study by CIPD (2007) of nine UK private and public sector organizations found that:

- What is seen as talent and how it is developed is highly varied.
- There is no one definition of talent management.
- There was little evidence of employers adopting a formal talent management strategy.
- Talent management programmes varied in terms of who they were aimed at and how.
- There were issues relating to the demotivation of individuals not selected for

talent management, especially if this meant that they had fewer resources and opportunities for progression.

- There was often a lack of integration with other HR programmes.

The CIPD 2013 learning and talent development survey revealed that the six most important objectives of respondents' talent management policies were:

- 1 Growing future senior managers/leaders (62 per cent).
- 2 Developing high-potential employees (60 per cent).
- 3 Enabling the achievement of the organization's strategic goals (37 per cent).
- 4 Retaining key staff (36 per cent).
- 5 Meeting the future skills requirements of the organization (32 per cent).
- 6 Attracting and recruiting key staff to the organization (27 per cent).

The most effective approach used by respondents was coaching, followed by development programmes and mentoring.

## Career management

Career management is about providing the organization with the flow of talent it needs. But it is also concerned with the provision of opportunities for people to develop their abilities and their careers in order to satisfy their own aspirations. It integrates the needs of the organization with the needs of the individual.

An important part of career management is career planning, which shapes the progression of individuals within an organization in accordance with assessments of organizational needs, defined employee success profiles and the performance, potential and preferences of individual members of the enterprise. Career management also involves career counselling to help people develop their careers to their advantage as well as that of the organization.

Career management has to take account of the fact that many people are not interested in developing their careers in one organization and prefer to look

for new experience elsewhere. But as De Vos and Dries (2013: 1828) point out: 'Although careers for life, admittedly, are a reality from a distant past, the organizational career is far from dead.'

## Aims

For the organization, the aim of career management is to meet the objectives of its talent management policies, which are to ensure that there is a talent flow that creates and maintains the required talent pool. For employees, the aims of career management policies are: 1) to give them the guidance, support and encouragement they need to fulfil their potential and achieve a successful career with the organization in tune with their talents and ambitions; and 2) to provide those with promise a sequence of experience and learning activities that will equip them for whatever level of responsibility they have the ability to reach.

Career management calls for an approach that explicitly takes into account both organizational needs and employee interests. It calls for creativity in identifying ways to provide development opportunities. Career management policies and practices are best based on an understanding of the stages through which careers progress in organizations.

## Career stages

The stages of a career within an organization can be described as a career life cycle. Hall (1984) set this out as follows:

- 1 Entry to the organization, when the individual can begin the process of self-directed career planning.
- 2 Progress within particular areas of work, where skills and potential are developed through experience, training, coaching, mentoring and performance management.
- 3 Mid-career, when some people will still have good career prospects while others may have got as far as they are going to get, or at least feel that they have. It is necessary to ensure that these 'plateaued' people do not lose interest at this stage by taking such steps as providing them with cross-functional moves, job rotation, special assignments, recognition and rewards for effective performance, etc.

- 4 Later career, when individuals may have settled down at whatever level they have reached but are beginning to be concerned about the future. They need to be treated with respect as people who are still making a contribution and be given opportunities to take on new challenges wherever this is possible. They may also need reassurance about their future with the organization and what is to happen to them when they leave.
- 5 End of career with the organization – the possibility of phasing disengagement by being given the chance to work part-time for a period before they finally have to go should be considered at this stage.

### Career dynamics

Career management should be based on an understanding of career dynamics. This is concerned with how careers progress – the ways in which people move through their careers either upwards when they are promoted, or by enlarging or enriching their roles to take on greater responsibilities or make more use of their skills and abilities. The three stages of career progression – expanding, establishing and

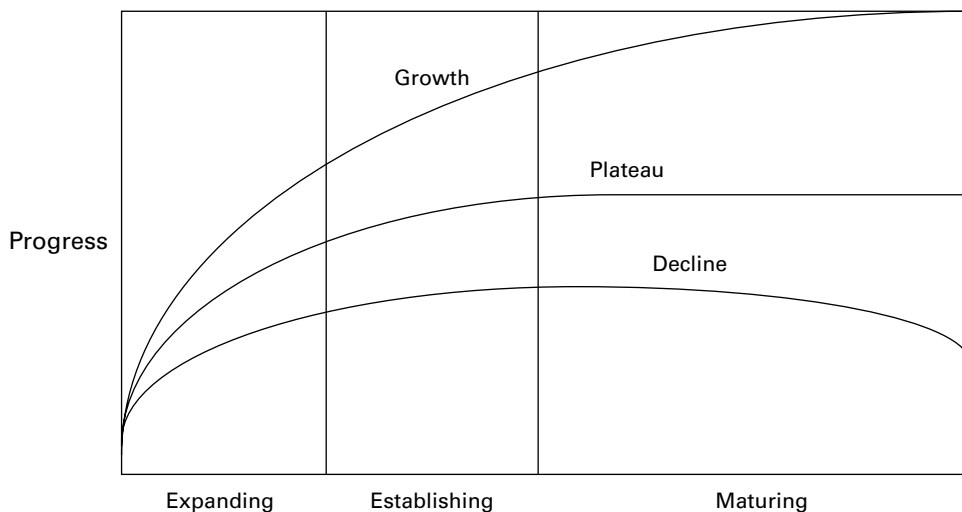
maturing – are illustrated in Figure 20.3. This also shows how individuals progress or fail to progress at different rates through these stages.

### Career development strategy

A career development strategy might include the following activities:

- a policy of promoting from within wherever possible;
- career routes enabling talented people to move upwards or laterally in the organization as their development and job opportunities take them;
- personal development planning as a major part of the performance management process, to develop each individual's knowledge and skills;
- systems and processes to achieve sharing and development of knowledge (especially tacit) across the firm;
- multidisciplinary project teams, with a shifting membership, to offer developmental opportunities for as wide a range of employees as possible.

**FIGURE 20.3** Career progression stages



## Career management activities

As described by Hirsh and Carter (2002), career management encompasses recruitment, personal development plans, lateral moves, special assignments at home or abroad, development positions, career bridges, lateral moves and support for employees who want to develop.

Baruch and Peiperl (2000) identified 17 career management practices, and their survey of 194 UK companies established a rank order for their use. The practices are listed below in order, from most frequent to least frequent use:

- 1 Postings regarding internal job openings.
- 2 Formal education as part of career development.
- 3 Performance appraisal as a basis for career planning.
- 4 Career counselling by manager.
- 5 Lateral moves to create cross-functional experience.
- 6 Career counselling by HR department.
- 7 Retirement preparation programmes.
- 8 Succession planning.
- 9 Formal mentoring.
- 10 Common career paths.

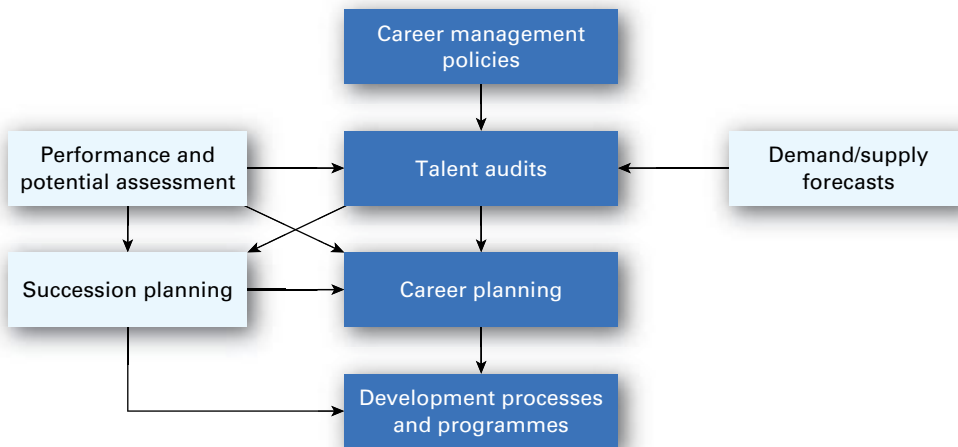
- 11 Dual ladder career paths (parallel hierarchy for professional staff).
- 12 Books and/or pamphlets on career issues.
- 13 Written personal career planning (as done by the organization or personally).
- 14 Assessment centres.
- 15 Peer appraisal.
- 16 Career workshops.
- 17 Upward (subordinate) appraisal.

The process of career management is illustrated in Figure 20.4.

## Career management policies

The organization needs to decide on the degree to which it ‘makes or buys’ talented people, which means answering the questions: to what extent it should grow its own talent (a promotion from within policy); how much it should rely on external recruitment (bringing ‘fresh blood’ into the organization). The policy may be to recruit potentially high performers who will be good at their present job and are rewarded accordingly. If they are really good, they will be promoted and the enterprise will get what it wants. Deliberately training managers for a future that will never happen is a waste of time.

**FIGURE 20.4** The process of career management



In contrast, and much less frequently, employers who believe in long-term career planning develop structured approaches to career management. These include elaborate reviews of performance and potential, assessment centres to identify talent or confirm that it is there, high-flyer schemes and planned job moves in line with a predetermined programme.

There may also be policies for dealing with the 'plateaued' manager who has got so far but will get no further. Some managers in this position may be reconciled to reaching that level but continue to work effectively. Others will become bored, frustrated and unproductive, especially rising stars who are on the wane. The steps that can be taken to deal with this problem include:

- lateral moves into different functional areas or specialized subsidiaries, to provide new challenges and career breadth;
- temporary assignments and secondments outside the organization;
- appointments as leaders of project teams set up to deal with performance barriers inside the organization such as the slowness of responses to customer complaints.

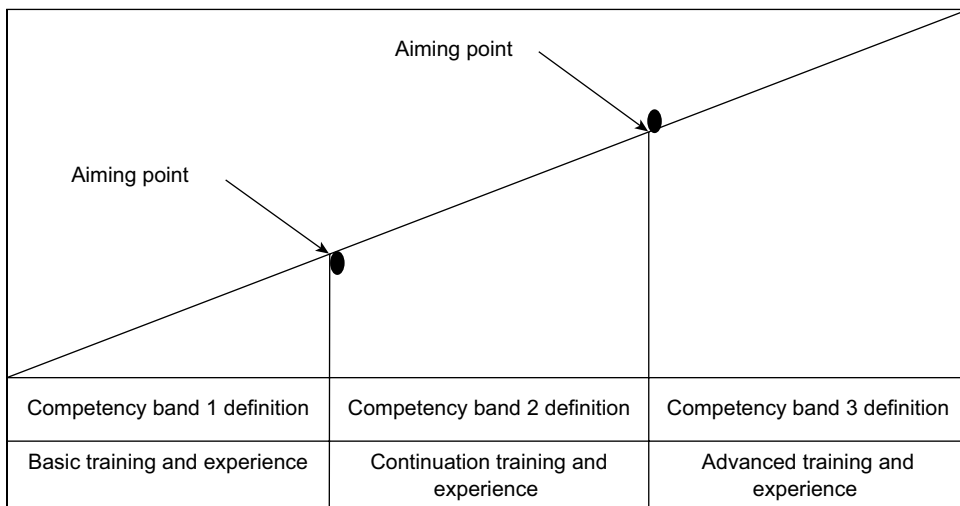
### Career planning

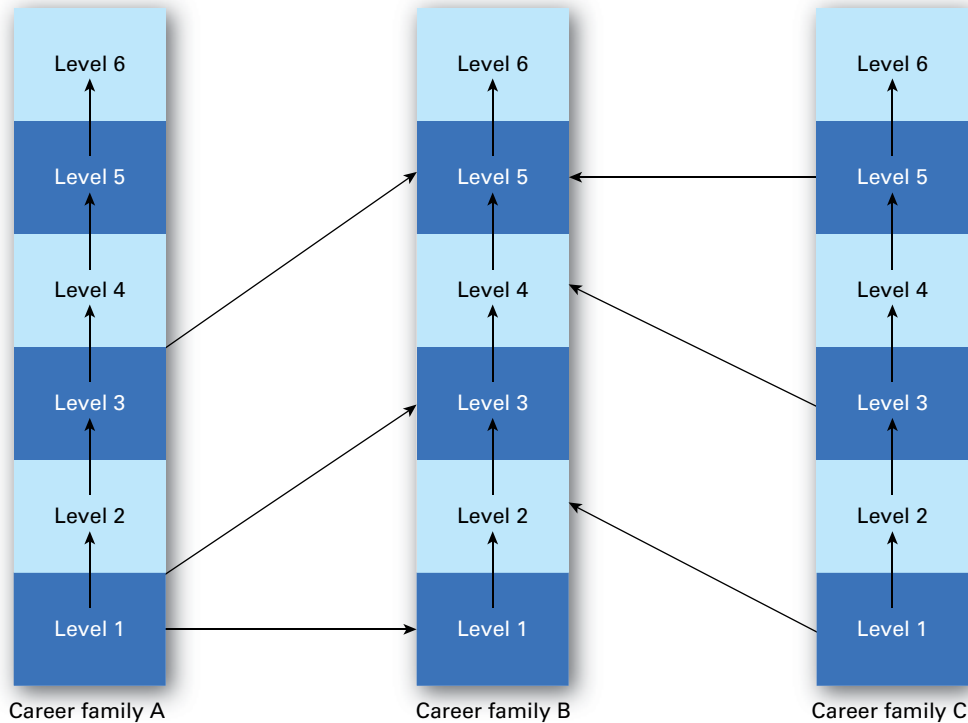
Career planning involves the definition of career paths – the routes people can take to advance their

careers within an organization. It uses all the information provided by the organization's assessments of requirements, the assessments of performance and potential and management succession plans, and translates it into the form of individual career development programmes and general arrangements for management development, career counselling and mentoring.

It is possible to define career progression in terms of what people are required to know and be able to do to carry out work to progress up the 'career ladder' (the sequence of jobs at increasing levels of responsibility that constitutes a career). These levels can be described as 'competency bands'. For each band, the competencies needed to achieve a move to that level would be defined in order to produce a career map incorporating 'aiming points' for individuals, as illustrated in Figure 20.5. People would be made aware of the competency levels they must reach to achieve progress in their careers. This would help them to plan their own development, although support and guidance should be provided by their managers, HR specialists and, if they exist, management development advisers or mentors. The provision of additional experience and training could be arranged as appropriate, but it would be important to clarify what individual employees need to do for themselves if they want to progress within the organization. At Procter & Gamble, for example, 'destination jobs' are identified for rising

**FIGURE 20.5** Competency band career progression system



**FIGURE 20.6** Career paths in a career family structure

stars, which are attainable only if the employee continues to perform, impress and demonstrate growth potential.

Career family grade structures, as described in Chapter 27, can define levels of competency in each career family and show career paths upwards within families or between families. This is illustrated in Figure 20.6.

Formal career planning may be the ideal but, as noted by Hirsh *et al* (2000), there has been a shift from managed career moves to more open internal job markets. The process of internal job application has become the main way in which employees progress their careers.

### **Self-managed careers**

The organization may need to manage careers as part of its talent management and management

succession programmes and can provide support and guidance to people with potential. Ultimately, however, it is up to individuals to manage their own careers within and beyond their present organization. Handy (1984) used the term ‘portfolio career’ to describe his forecast that people will increasingly change the direction of their careers during the course of their working life. Hall (1996) coined the phrase the ‘protean career’ in which individuals take responsibility for transforming their career path (the name comes from the Greek god Proteus, who could change his shape at will).

Schein (1978) originated the notion of ‘career anchors’. He defined them as the self-concept of people, consisting of self-perceived talents and abilities, basic values and a sense of motives and needs relating to their careers. As people gain work experience, career anchors evolve and function as stabilizing forces, hence the metaphor of ‘anchor’.

## CASE STUDIES

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### BT

BT's approach to investing in its talent is primarily focused on responding to individual needs in line with a BT-wide 'Talent Deal'. This is a set of commitments made to individuals in BT's talent pool on the support they can expect in areas such as career planning and movement, opportunities for

networking and meeting top executives, and mentoring. It also specifies the commitments expected of BT's talent pool members, such as the contribution they make to supporting the development of other colleagues.

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### Cargill

The Cargill food business operates a global, corporate-level labour and talent management process. This is structured on the lines of 'food platforms' (collections of around eight business units that operate in the food businesses) and has representatives from Latin America, Europe, Asia, etc, meeting twice per year. They look at the work of the businesses and consider how talent might be managed and succession planned in those businesses. A workable model exists to look at talent management and succession

planning at a platform level and at a practical level. Consideration is being given to how to integrate talent management and succession planning on a global basis, and a start has been made on highlighting positive and negative aspects of talent management and succession planning. These will be discussed at corporate level by the board to ensure that Cargill values are embedded in future talent management and succession planning strategy, policies and practices.

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### GlaxoSmithKline

GlaxoSmithKline is identifying those positions, at both the corporate and business-unit levels, that are critical to the company's success in a rapidly changing competitive environment. As part of that initiative, the company developed a statement of its workforce philosophy and

management guidelines. One of these explicitly addresses 'workforce differentiation' and reads, in part: 'It is essential that we have key talent in critical positions and that the careers of these individuals are managed centrally.'

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### HSBC

As reported by Ready and Conger (2007: 72–73), HSBC has created a system of talent pools that track and manage the careers of employees with high potential. Employees in these pools are selected initially for new assignments within their region or line of business and, over time, are given positions that cross boundaries in order to demonstrate that they have the potential to reach a senior

management role. They can then be placed in the group talent pool, which means that they have the potential to reach the senior executive level in three to five years and top management in the longer term. Leaders conduct talent relationship dialogues with members of each pool in order to address their development needs and concerns.

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## IBM

The overall aim of talent management within IBM is 'to develop the leaders of tomorrow'. Part of what makes it a global company is the importance it places on high-potential people gaining international experience. For employees, being identified as talent therefore drives many opportunities in the company.

Every leader in the company has responsibility for identifying and nurturing talent. The areas for them to look for are aptitude, potential and the ability to grow and develop. The identification of talented individuals is based

on their performance against 10 leadership competencies, which are consistent globally. The leadership competencies are used as a development tool for employees at all levels in IBM, not just those already highlighted as having potential.

Readiness for promotion to executive roles is linked to competencies. For example, if an individual needs to get client relationship-building skills, then his or her next job has to include that. Readiness is categorized in terms of 'next job' or 'two jobs away' rather than a number of years.

## Standard Chartered Bank

As reported by the CIPD (2010c), Standard Chartered was looking closely at its existing approach to talent management. This has involved:

- re-examining the processes, to ensure that there is greater transparency, education and understanding about the importance of robust talent identification and development;
- embedding talent processes to establish clearer links between our talent processes and other global people

processes around performance management and engagement;

- encouraging more experiential-based learning centred more on on-the-job learning and learning from others;
- providing support to help our managers and leaders engage and motivate their teams;
- ensuring that talented staff continue to perform above their peer group, are highly engaged and that they are retained.

## Management succession planning

Management succession planning is the process of ensuring that capable managers are available to fill vacant managerial posts. Three questions need to be answered: first, are there enough potential successors available – a supply of people coming through who can take key roles in the longer term? Second, are they good enough? Third, do they have the right skills and competencies for the future? At different stages in their careers, managers may be categorized as being ready to do the next job now, or being ready for a specified higher-grade position in, say, two years' time, or as a high-flyer on the 'A list' who has senior management potential. Such assessments generate development plans such as leadership and

development programmes, special assignments and job rotation.

As noted by Iles and Preece (2010: 256), succession planning can be seen in terms of identifying successors for key posts and then planning career moves and/or development activities for these potential successors. They suggested that:

Processes need to be designed round purpose, population, principles, process and players, with senior management engagement and HR championing. The highest potential employees are thus offered accelerated development and career paths. Of course, the downside is that non-selected employees may feel that they are less valued and have less access to development opportunities.

They also commented that in reality few companies have such programmes and that some are critical of attempts to equate succession planning with talent



**FIGURE 20.7** Management succession schedule

MANAGEMENT SUCCESSION SCHEDULE					Department:	Director/manager:		
Existing managers					Potential successors			
Name	Position	Due for replacement	Rating		If promotable, to what position and when?	Names: 1st and 2nd choice	Positions	When
			Performance	Potential				

management, arguing instead for a ‘talent on demand’ framework, ‘based on managing risk (not overestimating the places to be filled) and using talent pools to span functions’ (ibid: 256). They reported that some people are more positive about the value of ‘leadership pipelines’, which enable the organization to:

- focus on development;
- identify critical ‘lynchpin’ roles;
- create transparent succession management systems;
- regularly measure progress;
- ensure flexibility.

Succession planning is based on the information about managers in supply and demand forecasts, talent audits and performance and potential reviews. In some large organizations where demand and supply forecasts can be made accurately, there are highly formalized succession planning processes based on the sort of management succession schedule illustrated in Figure 20.7.

However, the scope for formal succession planning may be limited in today’s more flexible and

rapidly changing organizations, where elaborate succession plans could be out of date as soon as they are made. In these circumstances, the most that can be done is to use talent management and management development processes to ensure that there are plenty of talented people around in ‘talent pools’ to fill vacancies as they arise on the basis of ‘talent on demand’, bearing in mind that the most talented or ambitious individuals may not want to wait very long.

As McDonnell and Collings (2011: 64) emphasized:

Succession planning has evolved from the traditional short-term focus on replacing senior managers if they happened to leave without prior warning. There is now a more long-term aim of developing a cadre of key talent who able to take on higher level roles, potentially roles that may not currently exist... The utilization of talent pools consisting of employees with key generic type competencies and skills allows the organization far greater scope when positions become available. Management will be able to select the most suitable candidate from a pool of candidates and train the person into the specific requirements of that particular role.

### Key learning points: Talent management

#### The meaning of talent management

Talented people possess special gifts, abilities and aptitudes that enable them to perform effectively. Talent management is the process of identifying, developing, recruiting, retaining and deploying those talented people.

#### The process of talent management

Talent management starts with the business strategy and what it signifies in terms of the talented people required by the organization. Ultimately, its aim is to develop and maintain a pool of talented people. Its elements are talent planning, resourcing strategies, retention programmes, talent development, career management and management succession planning.

#### Developing a talent management strategy

A talent management strategy consists of a view on how the processes should mesh together with an overall objective – to acquire and nurture talent wherever it is and wherever it is needed by using

a number of interdependent policies and practices. Talent management is the notion of ‘bundling’ in action.

#### Career management

Career management involves the definition of career paths – the routes people can take to advance their careers within an organization. It uses all the information provided by the organization’s assessments of requirements, the assessments of performance and potential and management succession plans, and translates it into the form of individual career development programmes and general arrangements for management development, career counselling and mentoring.

#### Management succession planning

Management succession planning is the process of ensuring that capable managers are available to fill vacant managerial posts. Traditionally it has been regarded as a formal process but it is increasingly that the need is to develop a pool of talented managers so that a ‘talent on demand’ approach can be adopted.

## Questions

- 1 What is talent management?
- 2 What is talent?
- 3 What are the elements of a talent management programme?
- 4 What is management succession planning?
- 5 What is career management?

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# PART V

## Learning and development

### PART V CONTENTS

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- 21** Strategic learning and development
- 22** The process of learning and development
- 23** The practice of learning and development
- 24** Leadership and management development

### Introduction

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Learning and development strategies and practices, as described in this part, aim to ensure that people in the organization acquire and develop the knowledge, skills and competencies they need to carry out their work effectively and advance their careers to their own benefit and that of the organization.

The term ‘learning and development’ (L&D) has largely replaced that of ‘human resource development’ (HRD), at least for practitioners. Rosemary Harrison (2009: 5) observed that:

The term human resource development retains its popularity among academics but it has never been attractive to practitioners. They tend to dislike it because they see its reference to people as a ‘resource’ to be demeaning. Putting people on a par with money, materials and equipment creates the impression of ‘development’ as an unfeeling, manipulative activity, although the two terms are almost indistinguishable.

The terms are indeed often used interchangeably by commentators and practitioners although the introduction of ‘learning’ has emphasized the belief that what matters for individuals is that they are given the opportunity to learn, often for themselves, with guidance and support, rather than just being on the receiving end of what the organization provides.

The following definition of strategic HRD, produced by Walton (1999: 82), could serve equally well as a definition of strategic L&D:

Strategic human resource development involves introducing, eliminating, modifying, directing, and guiding processes in such a way that all individuals and teams are equipped with the skills, knowledge and competences they require to undertake current and future tasks required by the organization.

This part deals with L&D under the following headings:

- strategic learning and development – how L&D is aligned to the business strategy, L&D strategy;
- the process of learning and development – how people and organizations learn, the concept of the learning organization;
- the practice of learning and development – identifying L&D needs, encouraging and supporting workplace learning, planning and implementing learning programmes and events, evaluating L&D;
- leadership and management development – the planning and implementation of processes and programmes for developing leadership qualities and for developing managers generally.

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## 21

# Strategic learning and development

## KEY CONCEPTS AND TERMS

Development	Learning and development (L&D)
Individual learning	Organizational learning
Learning	Strategic L&D
Learning culture	Training

## LEARNING OUTCOMES

On completing this chapter you should be able to define these key concepts. You should also know about:

- The meaning of learning and development (L&D)
- The meaning and aims of strategic L&D
- The basic philosophies that underpin L&D strategy and practice
- How to create a learning culture
- The nature of strategies for promoting individual learning

## Introduction

Organizations need people with high and appropriate levels of knowledge, skills and abilities. Steps taken to meet this need are business-led in the sense that they are based on an understanding of the strategic imperatives of the business and support the achievement of its goals. But organizations also need to take account of the personal needs of those they

employ for development and growth. This is good in itself but it means that the organization will be a more fulfilling and therefore attractive place in which to work.

This chapter starts with a definition of the process of learning and development and its elements, which leads to a definition of strategic learning and development (L&D) and its aims. Consideration is then given to the philosophy of L&D before

examining strategies for creating a learning culture and for promoting organizational and individual learning.

## Learning and development defined

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Learning and development is defined as the process of ensuring that the organization has the knowledgeable, skilled and engaged workforce it needs. It involves facilitating the acquisition by individuals and teams of knowledge and skills through experience, learning events and programmes provided by the organization, guidance and coaching provided by line managers and others, and self-directed learning activities carried out by individuals. Harrison (2009: 8) defined learning and development more broadly as follows:

The primary purpose of learning and development as an organizational process is to aid collective progress through the collaborative, expert and ethical stimulation and facilitation of learning and knowledge that support business goals, develop individual potential, and respect and build on diversity.

The components of L&D are:

- *Learning* – the process by which a person acquires and develops knowledge, skills, capabilities, behaviours and attitudes. It involves the modification of behaviour through experience as well as more formal methods of helping people to learn within or outside the workplace.
- *Development* – the growth or realization of a person's ability and potential through the provision of learning and educational experiences.
- *Training* – the systematic application of formal processes to impart knowledge and help people to acquire the skills necessary for them to perform their jobs satisfactorily.
- *Education* – the development of the knowledge, values and understanding required in all aspects of life rather than the

knowledge and skills relating to particular areas of activity.

Learning should be distinguished from training. 'Learning is the process by which a person constructs new knowledge, skills and capabilities, whereas training is one of several responses an organization can undertake to promote learning' (Reynolds *et al*, 2002: 9). Learning is what individuals do; training is what organizations do to individuals. The components of learning and development are shown in Figure 21.1.

## Strategic L&D defined

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Strategic L&D is an approach to helping people to learn and develop that is concerned with how the organization's goals will be achieved through its human resources by means of integrated L&D strategies, policies and practices. Like strategic HRM, it is based on the fundamental proposition that the human resources of an organization play a strategic role in its success. Strategic L&D policies are closely associated with that aspect of strategic HRM concerned with investing in people and developing the organization's human capital.

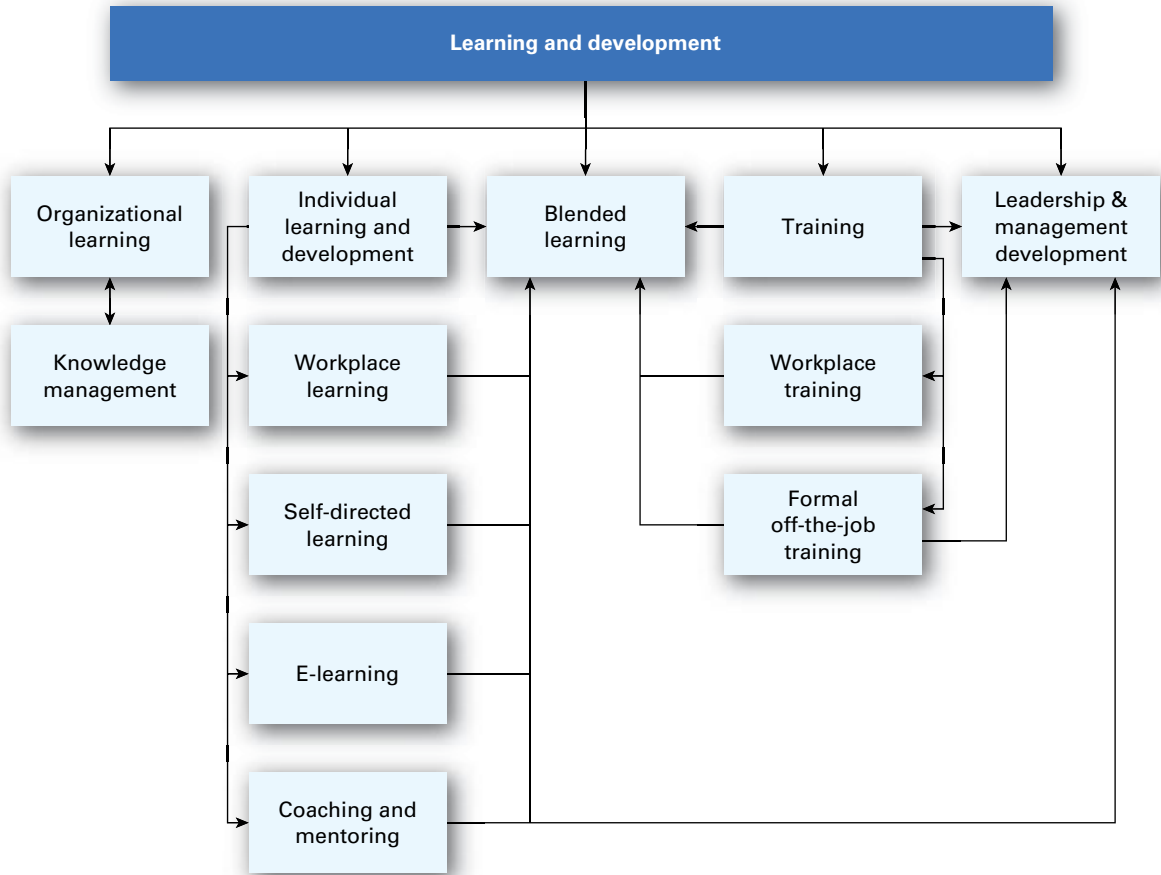
## Aims of strategic L&D

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Strategic L&D aims to produce a coherent and comprehensive framework for developing people through the creation of a learning culture and the formulation of organizational and individual learning strategies. It exists to enhance resource capability in accordance with the belief that a firm's human resources are a major source of competitive advantage. It is therefore about developing the intellectual capital required by the organization as well as ensuring that people of the right quality are available to meet present and future needs.

The main thrust of strategic L&D is to provide an environment in which people are encouraged to learn and develop. Although it is business-led, its strategies have to take into account the needs of individual employees. The importance of increasing employability outside as well as within the organization is also a concern.



**FIGURE 21.1** Components of learning and development

## Learning and development philosophy

The philosophy underpinning strategic L&D is as follows:

- Learning and development activities make a major contribution to the successful attainment of the organization's objectives and investment in it benefits all the stakeholders of the organization.
- Learning and development plans and programmes should be integrated with and support the achievement of business and human resource strategies.
- Learning and development should be performance-related – designed to achieve specified improvements in corporate, functional, team and individual performance and make a major contribution to bottom-line results.
- Everyone in the organization should be encouraged and given the opportunity to learn – to develop their skills and knowledge to the maximum of their capacity.
- The framework for individual learning is provided by personal development plans that focus on self-managed learning and are supported by coaching, mentoring and formal training.

- The organization needs to invest in learning and development by providing appropriate learning opportunities and facilities, but the prime responsibility for learning and development rests with individuals, who will be given the guidance and support of their managers and, as necessary, members of the HR department.

## The business case for L&D

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The business case for learning and development should demonstrate how L&D programmes will meet business needs. Kearns and Miller (1997) go as far as to claim that if a business objective cannot be cited as a basis for designing training and development, then no training and development should be offered.

A cost/benefit analysis is required to compare the benefits expressed in quantified terms as far as possible that will result from the learning activity. The business case has to convince management that there will be an acceptable return on the investment (RoI) in learning and training programmes and events. It can be difficult to produce realistic figures, although the attempt is worth making with the help of finance specialists. The case for investing in L&D can refer to all or any of the following potential benefits:

- Improve individual, team and corporate performance.
- Attract high-quality employees by offering them learning and development opportunities, increasing their levels of competency and enhancing their skills, thus enabling them to obtain more job satisfaction, to gain higher rewards and to progress within the organization.
- Improve operational flexibility by extending the range of skills possessed by employees (multiskilling).
- Increase the commitment of employees by encouraging them to identify with the mission and objectives of the organization.
- Help to manage change by increasing understanding of the reasons for it and providing people with the knowledge and skills they need to adjust to new situations.

- Provide line managers with the skills required to lead, manage and develop their people.
- Help to develop a positive culture in the organization, for example, one that is oriented towards performance improvement.
- Provide higher levels of service to customers.
- Minimize learning costs (reduce the length of learning curves).

The business case for L&D is enhanced by reference to research such as the examples given below.

## Impact of learning and development on performance

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Research by Benabou (1996) examined the impact of various training programmes on the business and financial results at 50 Canadian organizations. The conclusion reached was that in most cases a well-designed training programme can be linked to improvements in business results and that return on investment in training programmes is very high. Birdi *et al* (2008) in their longitudinal study of 308 companies found that extensive training produced a gain of nearly 6 per cent in value added per employee. Research by Aragon and Valle (2013) into the impact of training on the performance of managers established that firms that train their managers obtain better results than those that do not, and that the intensive training contributes to improved performance.

## Learning and development strategies

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Learning and development strategies are the active components of an overall approach to strategic L&D. They express the organization's intentions on how L&D activities will take place and provide guidance on how these activities should be planned and implemented. The strategies ensure that an L&D philosophy as set out above is acted upon. They are concerned with developing a learning culture, promoting organizational learning and providing for individual learning.

## Strategies for creating a learning culture

A learning culture is one in which learning is recognized by top management, line managers and employees generally as an essential organizational process to which they are committed and in which they engage continuously. The characteristics of a learning culture are self-managed learning not instruction, long-term capacity building not short-term fixes, and empowerment not supervision.

Reynolds (2004: 9) described a learning culture as a 'growth medium', in which 'employees will commit to a range of positive discretionary behaviours, including learning'. He suggested that to create a learning culture it is necessary to develop organizational practices that 'give employees a sense of purpose in the workplace, grant employees opportunities to act upon their commitment, and offer practical support to learning'.

The steps required to create a learning culture as proposed by Reynolds (2004) are:

- Develop and share the vision – belief in a desired and emerging future.
  - Empower employees – provide 'supported autonomy'; freedom for employees to manage their work within certain boundaries (policies and expected behaviours) but with support available as required. Adopt a facilitative style of management in which responsibility for decision-making is ceded as far as possible to employees.
  - Provide employees with a supportive learning environment where learning capabilities can be discovered and applied, eg peer networks, supportive policies and systems, and protected time for learning.
  - Use coaching techniques to draw out the talents of others by encouraging employees to identify options and seek their own solutions to problems.
  - Guide employees through their work challenges and provide them with time, resources and, crucially, feedback.
- Recognize the importance of managers acting as role models.
  - Encourage networks – communities of practice.
  - Align systems to vision – get rid of bureaucratic systems that produce problems rather than facilitate work.

## Organizational learning strategies

Organizational learning strategies aim to improve organizational effectiveness through the acquisition and development of knowledge, understanding, insights, techniques and practices. This is in accordance with one of the basic principles of HRM, namely that it is necessary to invest in people in order to develop the human capital required by the organization and to increase its stock of knowledge and skills. As stated by Ehrenberg and Smith (1994: 279–80), human capital theory indicates that: 'The knowledge and skills a worker has – which comes from education and training, including the training that experience brings – generate productive capital.'

## Individual learning strategies

Individual learning comprises the processes and programmes used to increase the capabilities of individual employees. Strategies for individual learning are driven by the organization's human resource requirements, which are expressed in terms of the skills and behaviours required to achieve business goals. Strategies should cover:

- how learning needs will be identified;
- the role of self-managed learning;
- the facilitation of workplace learning;
- the support that should be provided for individual learning in the form of guidance, coaching, mentoring, learning resource centres, e-learning and internal or external training programmes and courses.

### Key learning points: Strategic learning and development

#### Learning and development

Learning and development is the process of acquiring and developing knowledge, skills capabilities, behaviours and attitudes through learning or developmental experiences.

#### Strategic L&D

Strategic L&D is an approach to helping people to learn and develop that is concerned with how the organization's goals will be achieved through its human resources by means of integrated L&D strategies, policies and practices. Strategic L&D aims to produce a coherent and comprehensive framework for developing people through the creation of a learning culture and the formulation of organizational and individual learning strategies.

#### Learning and development strategies

Learning and development strategies are the active components of an overall approach to strategic L&D. They express the organization's intentions on how

L&D activities will take place in the organization and provide guidance on how these activities should be planned and implemented.

#### Learning culture

A learning culture is one in which learning is recognized by top management, line managers and employees generally as an essential organizational process to which they are committed and in which they engage continuously.

#### Organizational learning strategies

Organizational learning strategies aim to develop a firm's resource-based capability.

#### Individual learning strategies

The individual learning strategies of an organization are driven by its human resource requirements, the latter being expressed in terms of the sort of skills and behaviours that will be required to achieve business goals.

## Questions

- 1 What is learning and development (L&D)?
- 2 What is learning?
- 3 What is training?
- 4 What is development?
- 5 What is education?
- 6 What is strategic L&D?
- 7 What are the aims of strategic L&D?
- 8 What is a learning culture?
- 9 What is organizational learning strategy?
- 10 What is individual learning strategy?

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# 22

## The process of learning and development

### KEY CONCEPTS AND TERMS

Cognitive learning theory

Discretionary learning

Double-loop learning

Experienced workers standard  
(EWS)

Experiential learning

Learning organization

Operant conditioning

Organizational learning

Progressive parts method of training

Reinforcement theory

Self-directed (self-managed) learning

Single-loop learning

Social learning theory

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

On completing this chapter you should be able to define these key concepts. You should also understand:

- How people learn
- Learning theory
- The motivation to learn
- Learning styles
- Learning to learn
- The learning curve
- The implications of learning theory and concepts
- Operant conditioning
- Organizational learning
- The learning organization
- Self-directed learning

## Introduction

The practice of learning and development should be based on an understanding of learning theory and the processes involved in learning and development as described in this chapter. These processes are complex and varied.

## How people learn

Individuals learn for themselves but they also learn from other people – their managers and co-workers (social learning). They learn mainly by doing (experiential learning) and to a much lesser extent by instruction. The ways in which individuals learn will differ and what they learn will depend largely on how well they are motivated or self-motivated. Discretionary learning (self-directed or self-managed) takes place when individuals of their own volition actively seek to acquire the knowledge and skills they need to carry out their work effectively. It should be encouraged and supported.

The 70/20/10 model for learning and development is based on research conducted by the Centre for Creative Leadership which was described by Lombardo and Eichinger (1996). The model explains that people's development will be about 70 per cent from work experience, about 20 per cent from social learning (through managers by example and feedback and by fellow workers) and 10 per cent from courses and reading. In other words, by far the majority of learning takes place in the workplace. This should be the guiding principle for learning and development programmes.

## Learning theory

The key learning theories are:

- *Reinforcement theory* – based on the work of Skinner (1974) this expresses the belief that changes in behaviour take place as a result of an individual's response to events or stimuli and the ensuing consequences (rewards or punishments). Individuals can be 'conditioned' to repeat the behaviour by positive reinforcement in the form of feedback and knowledge of results. This is known as 'operant conditioning'.

- *Cognitive learning theory* – learning involves gaining knowledge and understanding by absorbing information in the form of principles, concepts and facts and then internalizing it. Learners can be regarded as powerful information-processing machines.
- *Experiential learning theory* – experiential learning takes place when people learn from their experience by absorbing and reflecting on it so that it can be understood and applied. Thus people become active agents of their own learning.
- *Social learning theory* – this states that effective learning requires social interaction. Wenger (1998) suggested that we all participate in 'communities of practice' (groups of people with shared expertise who work together) and that these are our primary sources of learning. Bandura (1977) viewed learning as a series of information-processing steps set in train by social interactions.

## The motivation to learn

People will learn more effectively if they are motivated to learn. As Reynolds *et al* (2002: 34) commented: 'The disposition and commitment of the learner – their motivation to learn – is one of the most critical factors affecting training effectiveness. Under the right conditions, a strong disposition to learn, enhanced by solid experience and a positive attitude, can lead to exceptional performance.'

Two motivation theories are particularly relevant to learning. Expectancy theory states that goal-directed behaviour is driven by the expectation of achieving something that the individual regards as desirable. If individuals feel that the outcome of learning is likely to benefit them they will be more inclined to pursue it. When they find that their expectations have been fulfilled, their belief that learning is worthwhile will be reinforced.

Goal theory states that motivation is higher when individuals aim to achieve specific goals, when these goals are accepted and, although difficult, are achievable, and when there is feedback on performance. Learning goals may be set for individuals (but to be effective as motivators they must be agreed) or individuals may set their own goals (self-directed learning).



## Learning styles

Learning theories describe in general terms how people learn, but individual learners will have different styles – a preference for a particular approach to learning. The two most familiar classifications of learning styles are those produced by Kolb *et al* (1974) and by Honey and Mumford (1996).

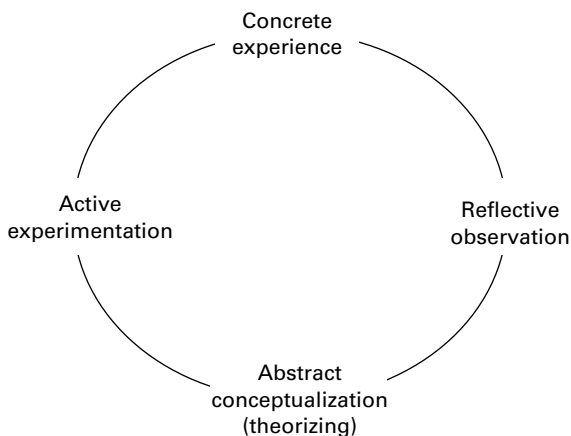
### Kolb *et al*'s learning style inventory

Kolb *et al* (1974) identified a learning cycle consisting of four stages, as shown in Figure 22.1. These stages were defined as follows:

- 1 *Concrete experience* – this can be planned or accidental.
- 2 *Reflective observation* – this involves actively thinking about the experience and its significance.
- 3 *Abstract conceptualization (theorizing)* – generalizing from experience to develop various concepts and ideas that can be applied when similar situations are encountered.
- 4 *Active experimentation* – testing the concepts or ideas in new situations. This gives rise to a new concrete experience and the cycle begins again.

The key to this model is that it is a simple description of how experience is translated into concepts that are then used to guide the choice of new experiences. To learn effectively, individuals must shift from

**FIGURE 22.1** The Kolb learning cycle



being observers to participants, from direct involvement to a more objective, analytical detachment. Every person has his or her own learning style; one of the most important arts that trainers have to develop is to adjust their approaches to the learning styles of trainees. Trainers must acknowledge these learning styles rather than their own preferred approach.

### The Honey and Mumford learning styles

Another analysis of learning styles was made by Honey and Mumford (1996). They identified the following four styles:

- 1 *Activists* – who involve themselves fully without bias in new experiences and revel in new challenges.
- 2 *Reflectors* – who stand back and observe new experiences from different angles. They collect data, reflect on it and then come to a conclusion.
- 3 *Theorists* – who adapt and apply their observations in the form of logical theories. They tend to be perfectionists.
- 4 *Pragmatists* – who are keen to try out new ideas, approaches and concepts to see if they work.

However, none of these four learning styles is exclusive. It is quite possible that one person could be both a reflector and a theorist and someone else could be an activist/pragmatist, a reflector/pragmatist or even a theorist/pragmatist.

### Use of learning style theory

Learning style theory can be used in the design and conduct of learning events or personal development programmes. Learning situations can be set up to fit the learning style of participants. The problem is that people do not necessarily have a single learning style and there certainly will be a large range of styles in any learning group. It may therefore be difficult to fit the approach to the style.

### Learning to learn

People learn all the time and through doing so acquire knowledge, skills and insight. But they will learn more effectively if they 'learn how to learn'.

As defined by Honey (1998), the process of learning to learn is the acquisition of knowledge, skills and insights about the learning process itself. The aims are to:

- provide a basis for organizing and planning learning;
- pinpoint precisely what has been learnt and what to do better or differently as a consequence;
- share what has been learnt with other people so that they benefit;
- check on the quality of what has been learnt;
- transfer what has been learnt and apply it in different circumstances;
- improve the learning process itself so that *how* people learn, not just *what* people learn, is given constant attention.

### The learning curve

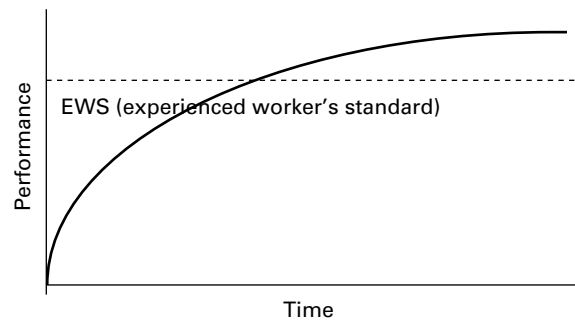
The concept of the learning curve refers to the time it takes an inexperienced person to reach the required level of performance in a job or a task, which is sometimes called the experienced worker's standard (EWS). The existence of the learning curve needs to be taken into account when planning and implementing training or instruction programmes. The standard learning curve is illustrated in Figure 22.2.

But rates of learning vary, depending on the effectiveness of the training, the experience and natural aptitude of the learner and the latter's interest in learning. Both the time taken to reach the EWS and the variable speed with which learning takes place at different times affect the shape of the curve, as shown in Figure 22.3.

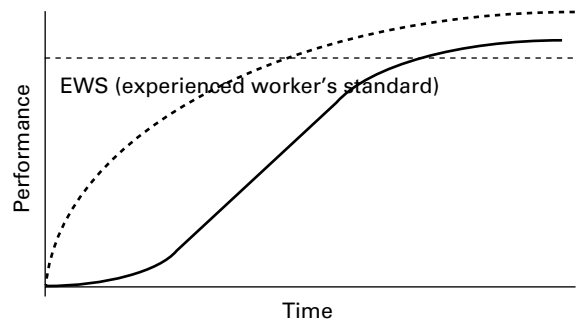
Learning is often stepped, with one or more plateaus, while further progress is halted. This may be because learners cannot continually increase their skills or speeds of work and need a pause to consolidate what they have already learnt. The existence of steps such as those shown in Figure 22.4 can be used when planning skills training to provide deliberate reinforcement periods when newly acquired skills are practised in order to achieve the expected standards.

When a training module is being prepared that describes what has to be learnt and the training

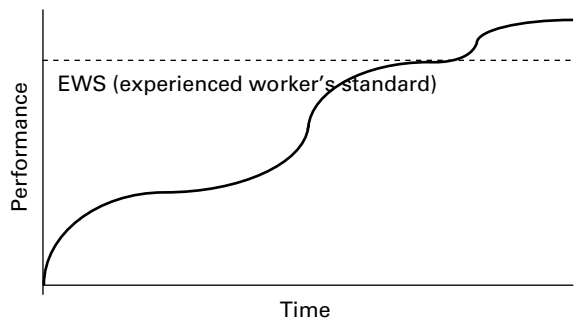
**FIGURE 22.2** A standard learning curve



**FIGURE 22.3** Different rates of learning



**FIGURE 22.4** A stepped learning curve



needed to achieve the required levels of skill and speed, it is often desirable to proceed step-by-step, taking one task or part of a task at a time, reinforcing it and then progressively adding other parts, consolidating at each stage. This is called the 'progressive parts method' of training.

## The implications of learning theory and concepts

The practical implications of the learning theories described above are summarized in Table 22.1.

### Organizational learning

Organizational learning theory is concerned with how learning takes place in organizations. It focuses on collective learning but takes into account the proposition made by Argyris (1992) that organizations do not perform the actions that produce the learning; it is individual members of the organization who behave in ways that lead to it, although organizations can create conditions that facilitate such learning. The concept of organizational learning recognizes that the way in which this takes place is affected by the context of the organization and its culture.

#### Organizational learning defined

Organizational learning is concerned with the methods adopted by organizations to promote

learning; it is not simply the sum of all the L&D activities that are carried out in an organization.

#### The process of organizational learning

Organizational learning can be characterized as an intricate three-stage process consisting of knowledge acquisition, dissemination and shared implementation. As such it is closely related to knowledge management. Knowledge may be acquired from direct experience, the experience of others or organizational memory.

Argyris (1992) suggested that organizational learning occurs under two conditions: first, when an organization achieves what is intended and, second, when a mismatch between intentions and outcomes is identified and corrected. He distinguished between single-loop and double-loop learning. These two types of learning have been described as adaptive or generative learning.

*Single-loop or adaptive learning* is incremental learning that does no more than correct deviations from the norm by making small changes and improvements without challenging assumptions, beliefs or decisions. Organizations where single-loop learning is the norm define what Argyris calls the ‘governing

**TABLE 22.1** The practical implications of learning theory and concepts

Theory/concept	Content	Practical implications
The process of learning	Learning is complex and is achieved in many different ways. The context is important.	Different learning needs require different learning methods, often in combination. Learning effectiveness depends on the extent to which the organization believes in learning and supports it.
Reinforcement theory	Behaviours can be strengthened by reinforcing them with positive feedback (conditioning).	Reinforcement theory underpins training programmes concerned with developing skills through instruction. In these, the learner is conditioned to make a response and receives immediate feedback and progress is made in incremental steps, each directed to a positive outcome.

**TABLE 22.1** Continued

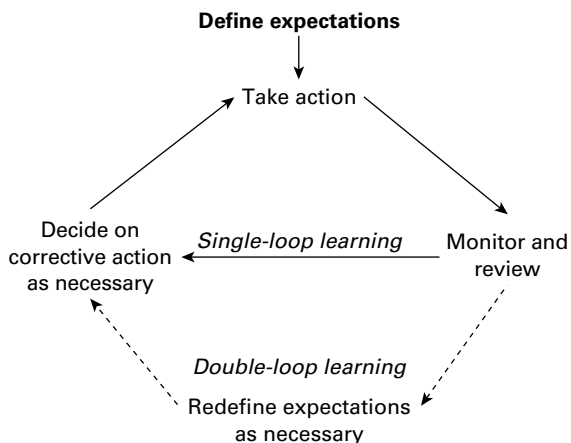
Theory/concept	Content	Practical implications
Cognitive learning theory	Learners acquire understanding, which they internalize by being exposed to learning materials and by solving problems.	The knowledge and understanding of learners can be enriched and internalized by presenting them with learning materials (eg e-learning). Case studies, projects and problem-solving activities can also be used for this purpose. Self-directed learning, personal development planning activities and discovery learning processes with help from facilitators, coaches or mentors are underpinned by cognitive learning theory.
Experiential learning theory	People learn by constructing meaning and developing their skills through experience.	Learning through experience in the workplace can be enhanced by encouraging learners to reflect on and make better use of what they learn through their own work and from other people. Self-directed learning and personal development planning activities with help from facilitators, coaches or mentors are also underpinned by experiential learning theory, as is action learning.
Social learning theory	Learning is most effective in a social setting. Individual understanding is shaped by active participation in real situations.	Learning can be encouraged in communities of practice and in project teams and networks.
Learning styles	Every person has their own learning style.	Learning programmes need to be adjusted to cope with different learning styles. Trainers also have to flex their methods. People will learn more effectively if they are helped to 'learn how to learn' by making the best use of their own style but also by experimenting with other styles.
The motivation to learn	People need to be motivated to learn effectively.	Learners should be helped to develop learning goals and to understand the benefits to them of achieving them. Performance management processes leading to personal development plans can provide a means of doing this.
The learning curve	The time required to reach an acceptable standard of skill or competence, which varies between people. Learning may proceed in steps with plateaus rather than being a continuous process.	Recognize that progress may vary and may not be continuous. Enable learners to consolidate their learning and introduce reinforcement periods in training programmes to recognize the existence of learning steps and plateaus.

variables', ie what they expect to achieve in terms of targets and standards and then monitor and review achievements, and take corrective action as necessary, thus completing the loop.

*Double-loop* or *generative learning* involves challenging assumptions, beliefs, norms and decisions rather than accepting them. On this basis, learning takes place through the examination of the root causes of problems so that a new learning loop is established that goes far deeper than the traditional learning loop provided by single-loop or instrumental learning. It occurs when the monitoring process initiates action to redefine the governing variables to meet the new situation, which may be imposed by the external environment. The organization has learnt something new about what has to be achieved in the light of changed circumstances and can then decide how this should be done. This learning is converted into action. The process is illustrated in Figure 22.5.

As Easterby-Smith and Araujo (1999) commented, single-loop learning could be linked to incremental change. In contrast, double-loop learning is associated with radical change, which may involve a major change in strategic direction. It is generally assumed that double-loop learning is superior, but there are situations when single-loop learning may be more appropriate.

**FIGURE 22.5** Single-loop and double-loop learning



## The notion of the learning organization

A learning organization was described by Senge (1990: 3), who originated the idea, as one 'where people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning how to learn together'. Further definitions of a learning organization were provided by Wick and Leon (1995: 299), who stated that it was one that 'continually improves by rapidly creating and refining the capabilities required for future success', and by Pedler *et al* (1997: 3), who referred to it as an organization that 'facilitates the learning of all its members and continually transforms itself'. Garvin (1993) suggested that learning organizations are good at doing five things:

- 1 Systematic problem solving – which rests heavily on the philosophy and methods of the quality movement. Its underlying ideas include relying on scientific method rather than guesswork for diagnosing problems – what Deming (1986) called the 'plan-do-check-act' cycle and others refer to as 'hypothesis-generating, hypothesis-testing' techniques. Data rather than assumptions are required as the background to decision-making – what quality practitioners call 'fact-based management', and simple statistical tools such as histograms, Pareto charts and cause-and-effect diagrams are used to organize data and draw inferences.
- 2 Experimentation – this activity involves the systematic search for and testing of new knowledge. Continuous improvement programmes – 'kaizen' – are an important feature in a learning organization.
- 3 Learning from past experience – learning organizations review their successes and failures, assess them systematically and record the lessons learnt in a way that employees find open and accessible. This process has been called the 'Santayana principle', quoting the philosopher George Santayana who coined the phrase: 'Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.'

- 4 Learning from others – sometimes the most powerful insights come from looking outside one's immediate environment to gain a new perspective. This process has been called SIS, for 'steal ideas shamelessly'. Another more acceptable word for it is 'benchmarking' – a disciplined process of identifying best practice organizations and analysing the extent to which what they are doing can be transferred, with suitable modifications, to one's own environment.
- 5 Transferring knowledge quickly and efficiently throughout the organization – by seconding people with new expertise, or by education and training programmes, as long as the latter are linked explicitly with implementation.

### **Critical evaluation of the learning organization notion**

The notion of the learning organization is persuasive because it provides a rationale for comprehensive learning and development programmes. However, Scarborough *et al* (1999) argued that the learning organization concept is overconcerned with organization systems and design. Little attention seems to be paid to what individuals want to learn or how they learn. The idea that individuals should be enabled to invest in their own development seems to have escaped learning organization theorists, who are more inclined to focus on the imposition of learning by the organization, rather than creating a climate conducive to learning.

Viewing organizations as learning systems is a limited notion. Argyris and Schon (1996) explained that organizations are products of visions, ideas, norms and beliefs, so that their shape is much more fragile than the organization's material structure. People act as learning agents for the organization in ways that cannot easily be systematized. They are not only individual learners but also have the capacity to learn collaboratively. This is described by organization learning theory and leads to the belief that it is the culture and environment that are important, not the systems approach implied by the concept of the learning organization.

The notion of a learning organization is rather nebulous. It incorporates miscellaneous ideas about

human resource development, systematic training, action learning, organizational development and knowledge management, with an infusion of the precepts of total quality management. But they do not add up to a convincing whole. Easterby-Smith (1997) contended that attempts to create a single best-practice framework for understanding the learning organization are fundamentally flawed. There are other problems with the concept: it is idealistic; knowledge management models are beginning to supersede it; few organizations can meet the criteria; and there is little evidence of successful learning organizations.

Burgoyne (1999), one of the earlier exponents of the learning organization, has admitted that there has been some confusion about it and that there have been substantial naiveties in most of the early thinking. He believes that the concept should be integrated with knowledge management initiatives so that different forms of knowledge can be linked, fed by organizational learning and used in adding value.

### **The learning organization and organizational learning**

The notion of the learning organization is often associated with the concept of organizational learning. But they are different. Easterby-Smith and Araujo (1999) explained that the literature on organizational learning focuses on the observation and analysis of the processes of individual and collective learning in organizations, whereas the learning organization literature is concerned with using specific diagnostic and evaluative tools that can help to identify, promote and evaluate the quality of the learning processes inside organizations. In other words, organizational learning is about how people learn in organizations, and the learning organization notion attempts to explain what organizations should do to facilitate the learning of their members.

However, as explained above, learning organization theory provides a dubious base for action. The idea of a learning culture supported by the understanding of how organizations learn, as provided by organizational learning theory and knowledge management initiatives, has more to offer.

## Self-directed learning

Self-directed or self-managed learning involves encouraging individuals to take responsibility for their own learning needs, either to improve performance in their present job or to develop

their potential and satisfy their career aspirations. It can also be described as ‘self-reflective learning’ (Mezirow, 1985), which is the kind of learning that involves encouraging individuals to develop new patterns of understanding, thinking and behaving.

### Key learning points: The process of learning and development

#### The processes of L&D

The processes of L&D are complex and varied. They consist of the ways in which individuals and organizations learn as explained by learning theory, the concept of organizational learning, the dubious notion of the learning organization, and the contribution made by individuals to their own learning and development (self-directed or self-managed learning).

#### How people learn

Individuals learn for themselves and from other people. They learn as members of teams and by interaction with their managers, co-workers and people outside the organization (social learning). People learn by doing and by instruction. The ways in which individuals learn will differ and the extent to which they learn will depend largely on how well they are motivated or self-motivated:

- The key learning theories are reinforcement theory, cognitive learning theory, experiential learning theory and social learning theory.
- People will learn more effectively if they are motivated to learn.
- Learning theories describe in general terms how people learn but individual learners will have different styles – a preference for a particular approach to learning. The two most familiar classifications of learning styles are those produced by Kolb *et al* (1974) and by Honey and Mumford (1996).
- People learn all the time and through doing so acquire knowledge, skills and insight. But they

will learn more effectively if they ‘learn how to learn’.

- The concept of the learning curve refers to the time it takes an inexperienced person to reach the required level of performance in a job or a task.

#### Organizational learning

Organizational learning is about the development and acquisition in organizations of knowledge, understanding, insights, techniques and practices in order to improve organizational effectiveness. It is concerned with the processes adopted by organizations in promoting learning; it is not simply the sum of all the learning and development activities that are carried out in an organization.

#### The learning organization

Defined by Pedler *et al* (1997) as an organization that ‘facilitates the learning of all its members and continually transforms itself’. Learning organization theory provides a dubious base for action. The idea of a learning culture, supported by the understanding of how organizations learn, as provided by organizational learning theory and knowledge management initiatives, has more to offer.

#### Self-directed learning

Self-directed or self-managed learning involves encouraging individuals to take responsibility for their own learning needs, either to improve performance in their present job or to develop their potential and satisfy their career aspirations.



## Questions

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- 1 How do people learn?
- 2 What are the key learning theories?
- 3 How are people motivated to learn?
- 4 What is the learning curve and what is its significance?
- 5 What is organizational learning?
- 6 What is the notion of a learning organization and how valid is it?
- 7 Is there any difference between the concepts of organizational learning and the learning organization? If so, what is it?
- 8 What is self-directed learning?

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## 23

# The practice of learning and development

## KEY CONCEPTS AND TERMS

Action learning	Informal learning	Mentoring
ADDIE model	Instruction	Multitasking
Bite-sized training	Just-in-time training	Personal development plan
Blended learning	Learning	Planned experience
Coaching	Learning and development	Return on expectations
Cost/benefit analysis	Learning contract	Return on investment
Criterion behaviour	Learning culture	Self-directed learning
Development	Learning evaluation	Systematic training
Discretionary learning	Learning event	Terminal behaviour
e-learning	Learning needs analysis	Training
Experiential learning	Learning programme	
Formal learning	Learning specification	

## LEARNING OUTCOMES

On completing this chapter you should be able to define these key concepts. You should also understand:

- The approaches to learning and development
- Workplace learning
- Mentoring
- Planned experience
- Transferring training
- Blended learning
- The role of the L&D function
- Identifying learning needs
- Coaching
- Personal development planning
- Training
- Effective training practices
- Planning and delivering learning events and programmes

## Introduction

This chapter deals with the conduct of learning and development (L&D) activities in organizations. It covers how learning needs are identified, the basic approaches of workplace learning and self-directed learning, how workshop learning can be enhanced through activities such as coaching and mentoring, training techniques and programmes, the concept of blended learning, how learning can be evaluated and the responsibility for learning.

## Identifying learning needs

All learning activities need to be based on an understanding of what should be done and why it should be done. The purpose of the activities must be defined by identifying and analysing learning needs in the organization and for the groups and individuals within it.

### Approaches to learning needs analysis

Learning needs are often established on the basis of general assumptions about what people in particular occupations need to know and be able to do, for example managers need to learn about leadership. This is an easy approach but it can be facile. The assumptions could be so generalized that the resulting learning event will be all things to everybody and nothing for anyone in particular.

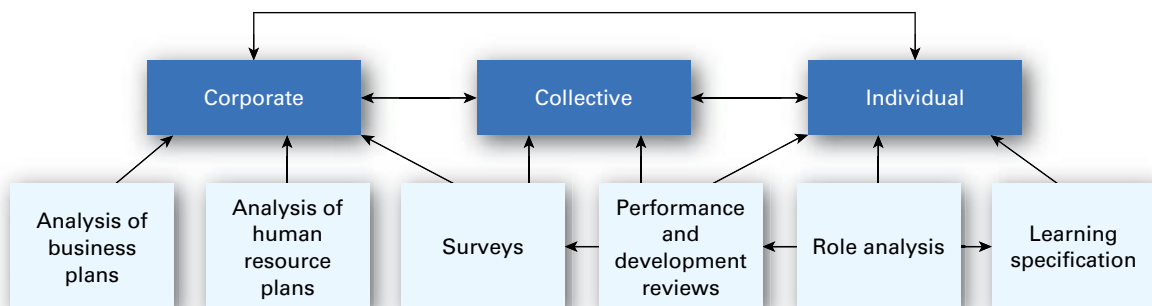
So far as possible, evidence should be collected on learning needs through gap analysis and a review of corporate, collective and individual needs. These three areas are interconnected, as shown in Figure 23.1. The analysis of corporate needs will lead to the identification of collective learning needs in different departments, functions or occupations, while these in turn will indicate what individual employees need to learn. The process operates in reverse. As the needs of individual employees are analysed separately, common needs emerge, which can be dealt with on a group basis. The sum of group and individual needs will help to define corporate needs, although there may be some overarching learning requirements that can be related only to the company as a whole to attain its business goals. These areas of analysis are discussed below.

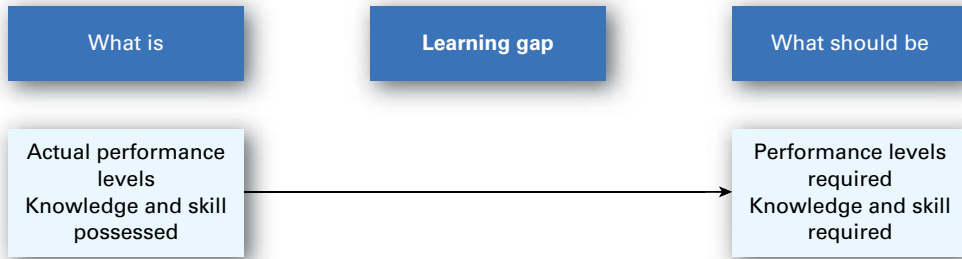
### Gap analysis

Learning needs analysis is often described as the process of identifying the learning gap – the gap between what is and what should be, as illustrated in Figure 23.2.

Gap analysis involves identifying the gap between what people know and can do and what they should know and be able to do, so that the learning needed to fill the gap can be specified. Information on the nature of the gap may be obtained by one or more of the methods described below. But this ‘deficiency model’ of training – only putting things right that have gone wrong – is limited. Learning is much more positive than that. It should be concerned with identifying and satisfying development needs – fitting people to take on extra responsibilities,

**FIGURE 23.1** Learning needs analysis – areas and methods



**FIGURE 23.2** The learning gap

acquire new skills to deal with changing work demands, or develop a range of skills to facilitate multitasking.

### **Analysis of business and workforce plans**

Business and workforce plans should indicate in general terms the types of skills and competencies that may be required in the future and the numbers of people with those skills and competencies who will be needed. An analysis should also be made of any areas where future changes in work processes, methods or job responsibilities are planned and any additional knowledge or skills that may be required. These broad indicators have to be translated into more specific plans that cover, for example, the outputs from training programmes of people with particular skills or a combination of skills (multi-skilling).

### **Surveys**

Special surveys or an interviewing programme can obtain the views of managers and other employees on what they need to learn. However, the material gathered from a survey may be unspecific and, when interviewed, people may find it difficult to articulate what they want. In the latter case it is best to lead with a discussion of the work they do and identify any areas where they believe that their performance and potential could be developed. This could lead to the identification of any additional things they feel they need to know or be able to do. Individual views can be amalgamated to provide a picture of common learning needs.

### **Performance and development reviews**

Performance management processes, as described in Chapter 25, should be a prime source of information about individual learning and development needs. Reviews should include an analysis of role requirements in the shape of knowledge, skills and abilities (KSAs) and the behavioural competencies needed to perform effectively, taking into account any new demands that will be made on the role holder. A joint assessment can then be made of development needs and what sort of development programme is required. The extent to which the individual meets role requirements can be reviewed and agreement reached on what needs to be done to remedy any deficiencies. This can lead to personal development plans and learning contracts, which involve action plans, self-directed learning and an agreement on what support will be provided to the individual by the organization and the manager. An overall analysis of performance and development review reports can reveal any common learning needs that can be satisfied by tailored learning events.

### **Role analysis**

Role analysis is the basis for preparing role profiles that provide a framework for analysing and identifying learning needs. Role profiles set out the key result areas of the role but, importantly, also define the competencies required to perform it. Performance management should ensure that role profiles are updated regularly, and the review can be built on an analysis of the results achieved by reference to the key result areas and agreed objectives.

The competency framework for the role is used to assess the level of competency displayed. An assessment can then be made of any learning required to develop levels of competency. Ideally, this should be a self-assessment by individuals who should be given every encouragement to identify learning needs for themselves. But these can be discussed with the individuals' manager and agreement reached on how the learning needs should be met by the

individuals through self-managed learning, and with the help and support of their managers. The output of role analysis could be a learning specification, as illustrated in Figure 23.3.

This method of assessing individual learning needs can generate information on common learning needs. The information can be related to the organization's competency framework and used to inform the design of competency-based learning events.

**FIGURE 23.3** A learning specification

<b>LEARNING SPECIFICATION</b>	
<b>Role:</b> Product Manager	<b>Department:</b> Marketing
<b><i>What the role holder must understand</i></b>	
<b><i>Learning outcomes</i></b>	<b><i>Learning methods</i></b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The product market</li> <li>• The product specification</li> <li>• Market research availability</li> <li>• Interpretation of marketing data</li> <li>• Customer service requirements</li> <li>• Techniques of product management</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coaching: Marketing Manager and Advertising Manager</li> <li>• Coaching: Operations Manager</li> <li>• Coaching: Market Research Manager</li> <li>• Coaching: Market Research Manager</li> <li>• Coaching: Customer Service Manager</li> <li>• Institute of Marketing courses</li> </ul>
<b><i>What the role holder must be able to do</i></b>	
<b><i>Learning outcomes</i></b>	<b><i>Learning methods</i></b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prepare product budget</li> <li>• Prepare marketing plans</li> <li>• Conduct market reviews</li> <li>• Prepare marketing campaigns</li> <li>• Specify requirements for advertisements and promotional material</li> <li>• Liaise with advertising agents and creative supplier</li> <li>• Analyse results of advertising campaigns</li> <li>• Prepare marketing reports</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coaching: Budget Accountant</li> <li>• Coaching: Mentor</li> <li>• Coaching: Market Research Department</li> <li>• Read: Product Manager's Manual</li> <li>• Read: Product Manager's Manual</li> <li>• Attachment to agency</li> <li>• Coaching: Mentor, read: analyses</li> <li>• Read: previous reports; observe: marketing review meetings</li> </ul>

## Skills analysis

Skills analysis, as described in Chapter 51, determines the skills required to achieve an acceptable standard of performance. It is mainly used for technical, craft, manual and office jobs to provide the basis for devising learning and training programmes.

## Evaluation

Further information should be obtained from learning evaluations, as described at the end of this chapter.

## Approaches to learning and development

Approaches to learning and development are influenced by the learning theory presented in Chapter 22, especially experiential learning theory. This emphasizes that people learn mainly from experience and therefore most learning takes place in the workplace as confirmed by the 70/20/10 model explained on page 292. It also indicates that people learn best when they do it for themselves – self-directed learning. But they need support and help. Experiential and self-directed learning can be enhanced in the workplace by activities such as induction, planned experience, coaching, mentoring and e-learning and planned development. These can be supplemented but not replaced by formal training, which involves the delivery of training events and programmes. The effectiveness of learning is increased by joining up the different methods available (blended learning). The basic approaches of workplace learning and self-directed learning are discussed below. The next section describes ways of enhancing workshop learning and this is followed by descriptions of training and blended learning processes.

## Workplace learning

Workplace learning is experiential learning. It is learning by doing and by reflecting on experience so that it can be understood and applied. Workplace learning is largely an informal process, although line managers have an important part to play in facilitating it. It involves self-directed learning and is enhanced by coaching, mentoring, e-learning and more

formal planned experience. It can be supplemented by training interventions, but more formal approaches are there simply to extend experiential learning.

A study by Eraut *et al* (1998) established that in organizations adopting a learner-centred perspective, formal education and training provided only a small part of what was learnt at work. Most of the learning described to the researchers was non-formal, neither clearly specified nor planned. It arose naturally from the challenges of work. Effective learning was, however, dependent on the employees' confidence, motivation and capability. Some formal training to develop skills (especially induction training) was usually provided, but learning from experience and other people at work predominated.

Reynolds (2004: 3) observed that:

The simple act of observing more experienced colleagues can accelerate learning; conversing, swapping stories, cooperating on tasks and offering mutual support deepen and solidify the process... This kind of learning – often very informal in nature – is thought to be vastly more effective in building proficiency than more formalized training methods.

The characteristics of workplace learning were explained by Stern and Sommerlad (1999) as follows:

- *The workplace as a site for learning.* In this case, learning and working are spatially separated with some form of structured learning activity occurring off or near the job. This may be in a 'training island' in the department or on the shop floor where the production process is reproduced for trainees.
- *The workplace as a learning environment.* In this approach, the workplace itself becomes an environment for learning. Various on-the-job activities such as coaching, mentoring, job rotation, job shadowing and cross-functional or cross-site project work can be conducted, which are structured to different degrees. Learning is intentional and planned and the aim is to support, structure and monitor the learning of employees.
- *Learning and working are inextricably mixed.* In this case, learning is informal. It becomes an everyday part of the job and is built into routine tasks. Zuboff (1988) commented that learning was at the heart of productive activity. Workers develop skills,

knowledge and understanding through dealing with the challenges posed by the work. This can be described as continuous learning.

But there are disadvantages. Learning on-the-job was once anathematized as ‘sitting by Nellie’ (this was when Nellie was a fairly common name), meaning that trainees were left to their own devices to pick up bad habits from their neighbours. It can be argued that formal training has its limits but at least it is planned and systematic. In fact the systematic training movement of the 1960s (discussed later in this chapter) was a reaction against traditional *laissez faire* approaches.

A further difficulty is that workplace learning depends largely on the willingness and ability of line managers to take responsibility for it. Some will, many won't. This crucial aspect of learning may therefore be neglected unless the HR or L&D function does something about it. And that is not easy, as discussed in the last section of this chapter.

### **Self-directed learning**

Self-directed learning is based on a process of recording achievement and action planning, which means that individuals review what they have learnt, what they have achieved, what their goals are, how they are going to achieve those goals and what new learning they need to acquire. The learning programme can be ‘self-paced’ in the sense that learners can decide for themselves, up to a point, the rate at which they learn, and are encouraged to measure their own progress and adjust the programme accordingly.

Self-directed learning is based on the principle that people learn and retain more if they find things out for themselves. But they still need to be given guidance on what to look for and help in finding it. Learners have to be encouraged to define, with whatever guidance they need, the knowledge and skills required to do their work. They need to be told where they can get the material or information that will help them to learn and how to make good use of it. This can be done through personal development planning, as described later in this chapter. They also need support from their manager and the organization with the provision of coaching, mentoring and learning facilities, including e-learning.

## **Enhancing workplace learning**

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Experiential learning in the workplace is important but it should not be left to chance. It needs to be enhanced by such means as induction learning, planned experience, coaching, mentoring, e-learning and personal development planning, as described below.

### **Induction**

Most new starters other than those on formal training schemes will learn on-the-job, although this may be supplemented with special off-the-job courses to develop particular skills or knowledge. On-the-job training can be haphazard, inefficient and wasteful. A planned, systematic approach is desirable. This can incorporate the definition to new starters of what they are expected to do (their roles), an assessment of what they need to learn (a learning specification), the use of designated and trained colleagues to act as guides and mentors, and coaching by team leaders or specially appointed and trained departmental trainers. A planned experience programme as described below may be desirable. These on-the-job arrangements can be supplemented by self-managed learning arrangements that offer access to e-learning material.

### **Planned experience**

Planned experience is the process of deciding on a sequence of experience that will enable people to obtain the knowledge and skills required in their jobs and prepare them to take on increased responsibilities. This enables experiential learning to take place to meet a learning specification. A programme is drawn up that sets down what people are expected to learn in each department or job in which they are given experience. This should spell out what they are expected to discover for themselves. A suitable person (a mentor) should be available in order to see that people in a development programme are given the right experience and opportunity to learn. Arrangements should be made to check progress. A good way of stimulating people to find out for themselves is to provide them with a list of questions to answer. It is essential, however,

to follow up each segment of experience to check what has been learnt and, if necessary, modify the programme.

## Coaching

Coaching is a personal (usually one-to-one) approach to helping people develop their skills and knowledge and improve their performance. The need for coaching may arise from formal or informal performance reviews, but opportunities for coaching will emerge during everyday activities. Coaching as part of the normal process of management consists of:

- using whatever situations may arise as opportunities to promote learning;
- controlled delegation – ensuring that individuals not only know what is expected of them but also understand what they need to know and be able to do to complete the task satisfactorily; this gives managers an opportunity to provide guidance at the outset: guidance at a later stage may be seen as interference;
- making people aware of how well they are performing by, for example, asking them questions to establish the extent to which they have thought through what they are doing;
- encouraging people to look at higher-level problems and how they would tackle them.

Coaching has an important role in workplace learning. Executive coaching is used frequently as part of a blended learning approach (ie one that includes a number of complementary learning activities) to leadership and management development. Coaching skills are covered in Chapter 52.

## Mentoring

Mentoring is the process of using specially selected and trained individuals to provide guidance, pragmatic advice and continuing support that will help the person or persons allocated to them to learn and develop. Mentors prepare people to perform better in the future and groom them for higher and greater things, ie career advancement. Mentoring can play an important part in a leadership and management development programme.

Mentoring is a method of helping people to learn and develop, as distinct from coaching, which is a relatively directive means of increasing people's competence. Mentoring promotes learning on-the-job, which is always the best way of acquiring the particular skills and knowledge the job holder needs. Mentoring also complements formal training by providing those who benefit from it with individual guidance from experienced managers who are 'wise in the ways of the organization'.

## E-learning

E-learning involves the use of computer, networked and web-based technology to provide learning material and guidance to individual employees. It can be delivered through a firm's intranet system.

E-learning enhances learning by extending and supplementing face-to-face learning rather than replacing it. It enables learning to take place when it is most needed (just-in-time as distinct from just-in-case) and when it is most convenient. Learning can be provided in short segments or bites that focus on specific learning objectives. It is 'learner-centric' in that it can be customized to suit an individual's learning needs – learners can choose different learning objects within an overall package. The main drawbacks are the need for learners to be self-motivated, the time and effort required to develop and update e-learning programmes and, sometimes, the availability of computers.

E-learning programmes may cover common business applications and processes, induction programmes and, frequently, IT skills development. They are not so effective for developing soft skills such as team building, communication or presentation that rely on interpersonal contact. But programmes can still cover basic principles that prepare people for practical face-to-face sessions, provide reinforcement through post-event reading, help with self-assessment and lead to chat-room support.

The emphasis is on self-paced learning – learners control the rate at which they learn, although they may be given targets for completion and guidance from tutors on how they should learn. However, the impact of e-learning is strongly influenced by the quality of the support provided to learners. It is the effectiveness of this support rather than the sophistication of the technology that counts.



## Performance and development management

Performance and development management processes as described fully in Chapter 26 enable managers and individual members of their teams to work together to identify L&D needs.

## Personal development planning

Personal development planning is carried out by individuals with guidance, encouragement and help from their managers, usually on the basis of performance and development reviews. A personal development plan sets out the actions people propose to take to learn and to develop themselves. They take responsibility for formulating and implementing the plan but they receive support from the organization and their managers in doing so. The purpose is to provide what Tamkin *et al* (1995) called a 'self-organized learning framework'.

## Stages of personal development planning

- *Analyse current situation and development needs.* This can be done as part of a performance management process.
- *Set goals.* These could include improving performance in the current job, improving or acquiring skills, extending relevant knowledge, developing specified areas of competence, moving across or upwards in the organization, preparing for changes in the current role.
- *Prepare action plan.* The action plan sets out what needs to be done and how it will be done under headings such as outcomes expected (learning objectives), the development activities, the responsibility for development (what individuals are expected to do and the support they will get from their manager, the HR department or other people), and timing. A variety of activities tuned to individual needs should be included in the plan, for example observing what others do, project work, planned use of e-learning programmes and internal learning

resource centres, working with a mentor, coaching by the line manager or team leader, experience in new tasks, guided reading, special assignments and action learning. Formal training to develop knowledge and skills may be part of the plan but it is not the most important part.

- *Implement.* Take action as planned.

The plan can be expressed in the form of a learning contract, which is a formal agreement between the manager and the individual on what learning needs to take place, the objectives of such learning and what part the individual, the manager, the L&D function or a mentor will play in ensuring that learning happens. The partners to the contract agree on how the objectives will be achieved and their respective roles. It will spell out learning programmes and indicate what coaching, mentoring and formal training activities should be carried out. It is, in effect, a blueprint for learning.

## Training

Training is the use of systematic and planned instruction activities to promote learning. The approach can be summarized in the phrase 'learner-based training'. It is one of several responses an organization can undertake to promote learning.

As Reynolds (2004: 45) pointed out, training has a complementary role to play in accelerating learning: 'It should be reserved for situations that justify a more directed, expert-led approach rather than viewing it as a comprehensive and all-pervasive people development solution.' He also commented that the conventional training model has a tendency to 'emphasize subject-specific knowledge, rather than trying to build core learning abilities'.

## The justification for training

Formal training is indeed only one of the ways of ensuring that learning takes place, but it can be justified in the following circumstances:

- The knowledge or skills cannot be acquired satisfactorily in the workplace or by self-directed learning.



- Different skills are required by a number of people, which have to be developed quickly to meet new demands and cannot be gained by relying on experience.
- The tasks to be carried out are so specialized or complex that people are unlikely to master them on their own initiative at a reasonable speed.
- When a learning need common to a number of people has to be met that can readily be dealt with in a training event or programme. For example: induction, essential IT skills, communication skills.

### **Transferring training**

The problem of transferring training was raised by Reynolds (2004: 47) as follows:

Some types of intervention [can] disrupt self-directed learning by paying insufficient attention to the needs of the learner in the work context. Methods that rely heavily on the transfer of external expertise or content to employees... carry the highest risk in this regard, since their design is often removed from the context in which work is created. As a result it is impossible to meet learning needs adequately.

This is a fundamental problem and applies equally to externally and internally run training courses where what has been taught can be difficult for people to apply in the entirely different circumstances in their workplace. Training can seem to be remote from reality and the skills and knowledge acquired can appear to be irrelevant. Transfer of learning problems often occur after management or supervisory training, but even the manual skills learnt in a training centre can be difficult to transfer.

To tackle this problem it is necessary to make the training as relevant and realistic as possible, anticipating and dealing with any potential transfer difficulties. Individuals are more likely to apply learning when they do not find it too difficult; believe what they learnt is relevant, useful and transferable; are supported by line managers; have job autonomy; believe in themselves; and are committed and engaged. Transfer is also more likely if systematic training and ‘just-in-time training’ approaches are used, as described below.

### **Systematic training**

Training should be systematic in that it is specifically designed, planned and implemented to meet defined needs. It is provided by people who know how to train and the impact of training is carefully evaluated. The concept was originally developed for the industrial training boards in the 1960s and, as illustrated in Figure 23.4, consists of a simple four-stage model:

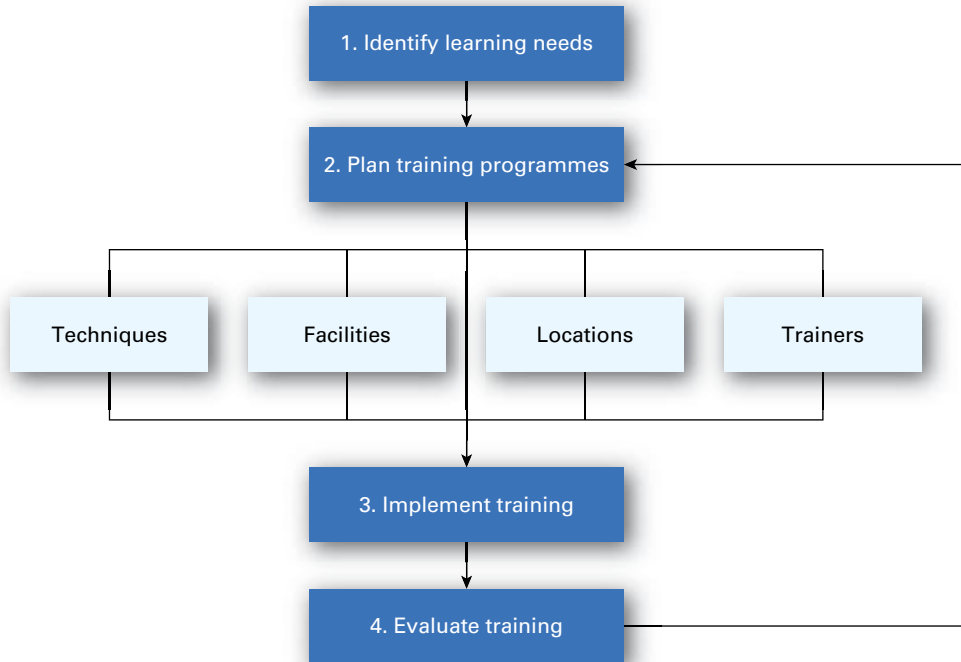
- 1 Identify training needs.
- 2 Decide what sort of training is required to satisfy these needs.
- 3 Use experienced and trained trainers to implement training.
- 4 Follow up and evaluate training to ensure that it is effective.

### **Just-in-time training**

Just-in-time training is training that is closely linked to the pressing and relevant needs of people by its association with immediate or imminent work activities. It is delivered as close as possible to the time when the activity is taking place. The training will be based on an identification of the latest requirements, priorities and plans of the participants, who will be briefed on the live situations in which their learning has to be applied. The training programme will take account of any transfer issues and aim to ensure that what is taught is seen to be applicable in the current work situation.

### **Bite-sized training**

Bite-sized training involves the provision of opportunities to acquire a specific skill or a particular piece of knowledge in a short training session focused on one activity, such as using a particular piece of software, giving feedback, or handling an enquiry about a product or service of the company. It is often carried out through e-learning. It can be a useful means of developing a skill or understanding through a concentrated session or learning activity without diversions, which is readily put to use in the workplace. But it can be weak in expanding individuals’ intellectual capacity and holistic (or ‘whole view’) understanding of the business – essential qualities to enable employees to respond creatively to the challenges of today’s knowledge economy.

**FIGURE 23.4** Systematic training model

It can also be facile and too restricted and relies on the support of line managers, which is not always forthcoming. It is best for training employees in straightforward techniques that they can use immediately in their work or to complement, not replace, longer courses or developmental processes.

### Types of training

Training programmes or events can be concerned with any of the following:

- manual skills, including apprenticeships;
- IT skills;
- team leader or supervisory training;
- management training;
- interpersonal skills, eg leadership, team building, group dynamics, neurolinguistic programming;
- personal skills, eg assertiveness, coaching, communicating, time management;
- training in organizational procedures or practices, eg induction, health and safety,

performance management, equal opportunity or managing diversity policy and practice.

### Effective training practices

Effective training uses the systematic approach defined above with an emphasis on skills analysis. The purpose of the training should be clearly defined in terms of the behaviour required as a result of training. The focus of the training should be to develop transferable skills. The training should be evaluated on the basis of the extent to which it has achieved its purpose.

## Planning and delivering learning events

This process of planning and delivering learning events and programmes is described by the ADDIE model, which has five phases: analysis, design, development, implementation and evaluation.

## Analysis phase

In the analysis phase the learning goals and objectives are established and the learning environment and learner's existing knowledge and skills are identified.

## Design phase

The design phase deals with subject matter analysis, the programme outline and the use of learning aids and assessment instruments.

## Development phase

In the development phase the detailed programme is constructed as conceived in the design phase. This covers the session plan, the outline content and learning outcomes of each session, methods of delivery, preparation of visual aids, handouts, supporting material and exercises, the arrangements for administering the programme (main lecture room, syndicate rooms, projectors, flip charts, etc) and the final printed version of the programme for distribution to nominating managers and, later, to delegates. This will set out the objectives and benefits of the programme and how these will be achieved. The costs of the programme will be calculated to ensure that they are within budget.

Those conducting the programme prepare the detailed contents of their sessions, decide on their method of delivery, rehearse their sessions and work out how the exercises will fit in. The programme director ensures that the efforts of all those involved are coordinated.

## Implementation phase

The programme is implemented as planned.

## Evaluation phase

Each session is evaluated by the programme director and, at the end, by participants. The impact of the programme on performance is measured and the degree to which it met expectations assessed.

A toolkit for the planning and delivery of learning events is contained in Chapter 67 of this handbook.

## Blended learning

Blended learning is the use of a combination of learning methods to increase the overall effectiveness

of the learning process by providing for different parts of the learning mix to complement and support one another. A blended learning programme might be planned for an individual using a mix of planned experience, self-directed learning activities defined in a personal development plan, e-learning facilities, group action learning activities, coaching or mentoring, and instruction provided in an in-company or external course.

Generic training for groups of people might include e-learning, planned instruction programmes and selected external courses. Within a training course a complementary mix of different training activities might take place, for example a skills development course for managers or team leaders might include some instruction on basic principles, but much more time would be spent on case studies, simulations, role playing and other exercises.

## Evaluation of learning

It is important to evaluate learning to assess its effectiveness in producing the outcomes specified when the activity was planned and to indicate where improvements or changes are required in order to make the training even more effective. As noted by Tamkin *et al* (2002), learning can be modelled as a chain of impact from the planning of learning to meet organizational or individual learning needs to the learning that takes place in a learning event, from learning to changed behaviour, and from changed behaviour to impact on others and the organization as a whole.

Evaluation is an integral feature of learning activities. In essence, it is the comparison of objectives with outcomes to answer the question of how far the event has achieved its purpose. The setting of objectives and the establishment of methods of measuring results are, or should be, an essential part of the planning stage of any L&D programme. Evaluation provides guidance on what needs to be done to ensure that learning activities are effective.

## Approach to evaluation

It is at the planning stage that the basis upon which each category of learning event or programme is to be evaluated should be determined. This means

defining expectations on the impact that the event will make in terms of criterion behaviour (the performance standards or changes in behaviour on-the-job to be achieved if a learning process is to be regarded as successful) and terminal behaviour (the actual work behaviour of learners when they complete their learning programme). The aim is to establish the extent to which the event has achieved its purpose. At the same time, it is necessary to consider how the information required for evaluation should be obtained and analysed.

The areas that need to be evaluated are:

- *Planning* – the extent to which needs were properly evaluated and objectives set.
- *Conduct* – how well the programme or event was organized and managed, the degree to which the inputs and methods were appropriate and effective, and its cost compared with the budget.
- *Reactions* – what participants felt about the event.
- *Outcomes* – the impact the event made on individual, departmental and organizational performance.

Evaluation can take place at different levels, starting with immediate reactions to the learning event and completed with an assessment of the impact it has had on organizational performance. The best known and most used system of levels was developed by Kirkpatrick (1994).

## Levels of evaluation – Kirkpatrick

The four levels of evaluation suggested by Kirkpatrick are as follows.

### Level 1: Reaction

At this level, evaluation measures how those who participated in the training have reacted to it. In a sense, it is a measure of immediate customer satisfaction. Kirkpatrick suggested the following guidelines for evaluating reactions:

- determine what you want to find out;
- design a form that will quantify reactions;
- encourage written comments and suggestions;
- get 100 per cent immediate response;

- get honest responses;
- develop acceptable standards;
- measure reactions against standards, and take appropriate action;
- communicate reactions as appropriate.

Research by Warr *et al* (1970) showed that there was relatively little correlation between learner reactions and subsequent measures of changed behaviour. But as Tamkin *et al* (2002) claimed, despite this, organizations are still keen to get reactions to training, and used with caution this can produce useful information on the extent to which learning objectives were perceived to be met and why.

### Level 2: Evaluate learning

This level obtains information on the extent to which learning objectives have been attained. It will aim to find how much knowledge was acquired, what skills were developed or improved, and the extent to which attitudes have changed in the desired direction. So far as possible, the evaluation of learning should involve the use of tests before and after the programme – written, oral or performance tests.

### Level 3: Evaluate behaviour

This level evaluates the extent to which behaviour has changed as required when people attending the programme have returned to their jobs. The question to be answered is the extent to which knowledge, skills and attitudes have been transferred from the classroom to the workplace. Ideally, the evaluation should take place both before and after the training. Time should be allowed for the change in behaviour to take place. The evaluation needs to assess the extent to which specific learning objectives relating to changes in behaviour and the application of knowledge and skills have been achieved.

### Level 4: Evaluate results

This is the ultimate level of evaluation and provides the basis for assessing the benefits of the training against its costs. The objective is to determine the added value of learning and development programmes – how they contribute to raising organizational performance significantly above its previous level. The evaluation has to be based on before-and-after measures and should determine the extent to which

the fundamental objectives of the training have been achieved in areas such as increasing sales, raising productivity, reducing accidents or increasing customer satisfaction. Evaluating results is obviously easier when they can be quantified. However, it is not always easy to prove the contribution to improved results made by training as distinct from other factors and, as Kirkpatrick said, that evaluators should be satisfied with evidence, because proof is usually impossible to get. Perhaps the most powerful method of demonstrating that ‘learning programmes pay’ is to measure the return on investment, as discussed below.

In practice, organizations find it difficult to advance above level 1. That is why there have been moves to use an overall measure such as return on investment or return on expectations.

### **Return on investment as a method of evaluation**

Return on investment (RoI) is advocated by some commentators as a means of assessing the overall impact of training on organizational performance. It is calculated as:

$$\frac{\text{Benefits from training (£) - costs of training (£)}}{\text{Costs of training (£)}} \times 100$$

Kearns and Miller (1997) believe that only this sort of measure is useful in evaluating the overall impact of training. They argue that particular hard measures should be used to evaluate specific training; for example, if development aims to bring about greater awareness of customers then it should be measured by the eventual effect on customer spend, customer satisfaction and number of customers.

The pressure to produce financial justification for any organizational activity, especially in areas such as learning and development, has increased the interest in RoI. The problem is that while it is easy to record the costs it is much harder to produce convincing financial assessments of the benefits.

### **Return on expectations**

The evaluation of learning has traditionally concentrated on the Kirkpatrick ‘levels’ approach. But there is a trend to concentrate more on the validation of the total learning process and on the outcomes of

learning. This means focusing on return on expectation measures, which assess the extent to which the anticipated benefits of any learning investment have been realized. As described by Anderson (2007: 33): ‘This involves focusing on establishing “up front” the anticipated benefits of learning interventions or investments with key stakeholders, and then assessing the extent to which the anticipated benefits have been realized.’

### **The problem with evaluation**

The need for evaluation is generally recognized by L&D specialists and the Kirkpatrick model is well known, but Grove and Ostroff (1990) noted that there were five barriers that appeared to explain why training evaluations were not carried out very effectively in organizations:

- 1 Senior management often not insisting on or requesting information on the impact of the training that was provided.
- 2 The lack of expertise among L&D professionals on how to carry out training evaluations.
- 3 A lack of clear objectives attached to training programmes so that actually knowing what to evaluate against is difficult if not impossible.
- 4 The limited budgets available to training departments means that resources are devoted to training provision rather than training evaluation.
- 5 The risks associated with evaluation may be too great, given that the evaluation data might reveal that the training had little impact.

The following comment on the limitations of traditional approaches to evaluation was made by Anderson (2007: 3):

Traditional approaches to evaluation set out to prove the merit of specific learning interventions and to demonstrate their cost-effective delivery. Such proof, however, while identifying that the trainer has done good work, does not necessarily assess the extent of the training intervention with the organization’s strategic priorities... Whereas a traditional approach to evaluation focuses on the reactions and consequences for learners and trainers resulting from discrete and individual

training interventions, a strategic approach requires a focus on the aggregate value contribution made by a more dispersed range of learning processes.

### Application of evaluation

The more care that has been taken in the assessment of needs and the more precise the objectives, the greater will be the possibility of effective evaluation. This is the basis for conducting evaluation at various levels.

It could be argued that the only feedback that matters from evaluation is the results in terms of improved unit or organizational performance that learning brings. But if this is hard to measure, a learning event could still be justified in terms of any actual changes in behaviour that the programme was designed to produce. This is based on the assumption that the analysis of learning needs indicated that the behaviour is more than likely to deliver the desired results. Similarly, at the learning level, if a proper analysis of knowledge, skills and attitude requirements and their impact on behaviour has been conducted, it is reasonable to assume that if the knowledge, etc has been acquired, behaviour is likely to change appropriately. Finally, if all else fails, reactions are important in that they provide immediate feedback on the quality of training given (including the performance of the trainer), which can point the way to corrective action.

## Responsibility for the implementation of learning

Individuals should be expected to take a considerable degree of responsibility for managing their own learning (self-directed or discretionary learning) but they need the help and support of their line managers and the organization, including the L&D function. Line managers have a key role in planning and facilitating learning by organizing induction training, providing learning opportunities (planned experience), coaching, mentoring, conducting performance and development reviews, agreeing learning contracts and personal development plans with their people, and helping them to implement those plans. But they have to be encouraged to do this. They should understand that the promotion of learning is

regarded as an important aspect of their responsibilities and that their performance in carrying it out will be assessed. They also need guidance on how they should carry out their developmental role.

Responsibility for L&D is being increasingly placed on managers and employees rather than on L&D professionals. The latter need to become learning facilitators rather than training providers or instructors. Stewart and Tansley (2002) recommended that training specialists should focus on learning processes rather than the content of training courses. Carter *et al* (2002) argued that changes in training delivery methods are leading to a variety of different role demands. These roles include facilitator and change agent.

### What L&D practitioners do

As facilitators, L&D specialists analyse learning needs and make proposals on how these can best be satisfied. They provide facilities such as learning resource centres and e-learning programmes and plan and implement training interventions, often outsourcing training to external providers.

The emphasis in current thinking is on enabling learning rather than just delivering training. The most important activities of L&D specialists are to encourage, guide and help line managers to fulfil their workplace learning responsibilities. But the reality is that many L&D practitioners are still in the training business. As Poell (2005: 85) noted: 'Although it is common nowadays to assert that employees are self-responsible for their own learning and careers, in practice, HRD professionals will spend most of their time coordinating, designing and delivering training to employees.' Sambrook and Stewart (2005: 79), on the basis of their trans-Europe research, concluded that: 'Despite the wishes and, in some cases, the efforts of HRD professionals, learning and development practice still relies to a significant extent on traditional and formalized training interventions.'

It is not difficult to understand why this is happening. The systematic training approach – ie training specifically designed, planned, implemented and evaluated to meet defined needs – is traditionally what professional trainers are expected to do, so they do it. The promotion and facilitation of self-directed and workplace learning are not such recognized requirements and are more difficult, so they don't do it.



## CASE STUDIES

### Developing a learning strategy for Remploy

Remploy is a government-funded organization that provides employment and development opportunities for disabled people. It operates 83 factories. The company's strategy for learning is explicit and well understood in the organization, and was developed from the bottom-up rather than top-down. Its starting point was recognition that a number of local initiatives in the factories were proving successful and could be developed on a national basis.

The trade unions advocated enhanced opportunities for skill development in basic areas. As a result a national strategy was developed with learning centres as a major element in all 83 sites. Although the use of each learning centre is locally determined, they all have the following in common: a physical location (with at least some PCs); a relationship with a local college whose tutors will visit the site to advise and facilitate; and access to a suite of e-learning programmes, made available from the LearnDirect library (the national e-learning initiative).

### Training overhaul for Scottish police

A radical overhaul of training for the Scottish police has created more opportunities for promotion and culminated in a prestigious National Training Award. The improved training scheme uses facilitated learning delivery, where trainees pre-read all information before attending sessions and then discuss issues and learn from each other. Responsibility for learning is now firmly placed on the shoulders of the individual – you have got to want to be a police officer and you have got to want to learn. After 15 weeks of initial training, a two-week 'reconvention' period

helps staff with the areas they particularly need to address. This training is tailored to individual requirements: syndicates of recruits with similar needs are put together to receive it. This 'partnership approach' had helped the participants to focus on communication and problem-solving skills. A Certificate of Higher Education in policing, accredited by the University of Stirling, is awarded on completion of the programme. There are also opportunities to take a diploma in management skills.

### Integrated e-learning at Cable & Wireless

E-learning at Cable & Wireless is based on the establishment and promotion of a single platform for learning. This has been delivered through an outsourcing arrangement with the e-learning company SkillSoft. The core platform is a learning management system that is available to Cable & Wireless colleagues as a portal labelled 'iLEARN'. All training delivery channels are linked to this portal. The library of

generic material consists of some 15,000 items plus about 60 modules commissioned by Cable & Wireless.

In the first year since the e-learning system was launched, three-quarters of the workforce used it and this penetration figure is rising. Some 20,000 e-learning activities were accessed and 15,000 hours of e-learning undertaken in total.

### Training and learning at a Customer Support Centre

The Customer Support Centre employs 300 people. Customer service agents work in a group of five, known as a 'pod'. One

of the pod members will be a team coach who provides support and advice to his or her agent colleagues.

A working knowledge of each customer support system is essential to do the job and one of the central tasks of the training department is to bring new entrants up to competence as quickly as possible. The following pattern is adopted. New entrants join in cohorts of 8 to 10 and spend their first week in the training room. As the week progresses they spend periods in a pod sitting next to a 'buddy', listening to calls. At the end of that week they are allocated to a pod

team and receive close ongoing support from the pod team coach.

Given the emphasis on learning in the workplace, the role of the team coach is critical and there are a number of steps in place to support and enhance their role. A set of skills and needs have been defined and these are delivered to the 30 centre team coaches in 90-minute modules in the training room.

## Career coaching at Orange

Within Orange, coaching is used in various ways to support people on-the-job and in leadership and personal development programmes. The career coaching programme uses volunteer line managers who have been trained to provide coaching to staff with whom they have no reporting relationship.

The two objectives for career coaching are: 1) as part of its overall talent management strategy Orange wants to see employees take greater responsibility for their own careers; 2) Orange is in a competitive market as far as skills and resources are concerned and this effort is intended to help with employee retention by engaging employees in conversations about their careers before they look elsewhere. Career coaching is offered to all staff, regardless of grade. The programme consists of three sessions of 90 minutes each, with a line manager coach trained specifically in career coaching.

Employees complete an online application, which must have their line manager's approval, and commit to the time required for the coaching process over an 8–10 week period. Included on this form is the question, 'Why do you want to be coached?' with some examples of the reasons that someone might choose.

The coaching process is tightly structured. The planned outcome is for the employee to develop career goals, which are discussed with the individual's manager at the next performance review. Coaches give employees exercises to work on between the meetings, drawn from a large selection offered by the talent management team.

After the process is completed, individuals are asked to complete an evaluation form describing their experience of the scheme, their coach's style and the outcomes they have achieved.

## Coaching at Marks & Spencer

Traditionally M&S trained its customer assistants by taking them off the shop floor for classroom-style training, but the company has introduced a new role, that of coach. When trainees join M&S, their coaches take them through all of the training required for their immediate role, as well as

any additional training they may need once qualified. Formal coaching cards are used, which address both service and technical skills and tell the coaches what to assess and what the learning should be. Each trainee is also provided with a booklet summarizing the main learning points.

## Implementing a basic skills programme at TNT

TNT UK Ltd has over 9,500 staff working throughout the UK and Ireland. Its core business is express and logistics delivery services both within the UK and internationally.

The basic skills programme was established as a joint initiative between TNT and the Transport and General Workers' Union (T&G). T&G provided the trainers and a contribution from the Union Learning Fund to establish the

programme; TNT provided the resources including the office space, computers and refreshments. The role of the T&G's learning representative was crucial in identifying staff with basic skills needs. Individuals were identified and encouraged by the union representative to join the programme. The challenge was to motivate staff to take part in the programme without it being perceived as a stigma. Tactics



included selling the benefits of the programme, for example improving communication skills such as reading, rather than focusing on tackling problem areas or deficiencies.

The programme was designed to take place over five days. A continuous course over several days has benefits

over a modular approach; for example staff are less likely to lose interest or suffer teasing from colleagues. Areas included reading, writing, numeracy and PC skills. At the end of the programme the participants received certificates from senior managers.

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### Self-directed learning in Vestas Blades UK Ltd

Vestas Blades UK Ltd is a wind turbine blade research, development and manufacturer based in the Isle of Wight and Southampton. The L&D policy adopted by Vestas was to give ownership of learning to individuals. Learning needed to be continuous, timely and relevant for people whose roles would present new challenges as the business grew. It wanted employees to have a choice about what they learnt, when and how. A menu of training courses not only seemed unattractive but was also seen to have limited effectiveness in terms of the transfer of learning to the workplace. A requirement of any new approach was that it should motivate employees by serving their own individual learning needs while at the same time meeting those of the business.

The self-directed learning programme began by introducing the concept of personal awareness (via the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator) and its relevance to learning. An inquiry tool was developed to help participants identify their own learning needs, known as the Needs Analysis Process (NAP). Individuals decided the learning

goals that would have the greatest benefit to them and their part of the business. The NAP focused attention on the impact that the business's strategic and operational objectives had on each participant's current and future level of performance.

Once participants were made aware of the wealth of learning resources available through books or e-learning, they chose the learning group they wanted to join. Each group consisted of four people from across the organization who would meet regularly every six weeks in confidence – serving as a support structure for its members. Such support was critical. The opportunity to talk about how to apply learning in the workplace not only helped group members make sense of the effect that their learning had but also supported fellow learners in the group working on the same or similar topics.

During the first year each group had its own facilitator, drawn primarily from Acuition consultants but also from within the company. The facilitator's role was to accelerate the group's capability to learn.

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### Measuring the contribution of learning to business performance at Lyreco Ltd (UK)

Lyreco UK is part of a large family-owned office supplies group operating extensively in Europe, Canada and Asia. Metrics are a central part of all management processes at Lyreco and these inform the learning investment and planning processes. In field sales, measures include sales turnover, margin and new business, whilst in customer service the performance and productivity metrics include costs per line, abandoned call rate, average call time, and average wait time. Monthly performance results in all areas are scrutinized to identify areas for attention, and the

learning and development team run learning sessions and activities aimed at helping people to improve their performance. When sales margin was identified as an area for attention, over 150 people attended focused workshops and subsequent performance results were tracked to measure improvements. Similarly, warehouse supervisors with the highest staff turnover attended learning programmes and, as a consequence, staff turnover was at its lowest ever levels.

## Key learning points: The practice of learning and development

### Approach to learning and development

- The starting point for learning and development is the systematic identification of learning needs. This provides the basis for making a choice between the various approaches available and for decisions on the practices that should be adopted for the chosen approach.
- The approaches from which a choice can be made are workplace learning, self-directed learning, e-learning and formal training and development activities involving the delivery of learning events and programmes.
- A blended learning approach should be adopted wherever possible.
- In each case, it is necessary to evaluate the effectiveness of the learning and development process so that improvements can be made if required.

### Identifying learning needs

All learning activities need to be based on an understanding of what needs to be done and why. The purpose of the activities must be defined and this is only possible if the learning needs of the organization and the groups and individuals within it have been identified and analysed.

### Workplace learning

Workplace learning is experiential learning. It is learning by doing and by reflecting on experience so that it can be understood and applied. Workplace learning is largely an informal process, although line managers have an important part to play in facilitating it.

### Self-directed learning

Self-directed or self-managed learning involves encouraging individuals to take responsibility for

their own learning needs, either to improve performance in their present job or to develop their potential and satisfy their career aspirations.

### Coaching

Coaching is a personal (usually one-to-one) approach to helping people develop their skills and knowledge and improve their performance.

### Mentoring

Mentoring is the process of using specially selected and trained individuals to provide guidance, pragmatic advice and continuing support that will help the person or persons allocated to them to learn and develop.

### E-learning

E-learning provides for learning via computer, networked and web-based technology. The process comprises defining the system, encouraging access, advising and assisting individual learners and encouraging and facilitating the creation of learning communities.

### Personal development planning

Personal development planning is carried out by individuals with guidance, encouragement and help from their managers as required. This should be the outcome of a performance and development review. A personal development plan sets out the actions people propose to take to learn and to develop themselves.

### Planned experience

Planned experience is the process of deciding on a sequence of experience that will enable people to obtain the knowledge and skills required in their jobs and prepare them to take on increased responsibilities. This enables experiential learning to take place to meet a learning specification.

## Planning and delivering learning programmes and events

The stages are:

- identify learning needs;
- define learning objectives;
- decide on content;
- decide on methods of delivery;
- decide on location, facilities, the budget and who delivers the programme;
- prepare information about the programme or event;
- deliver the programme or event;
- evaluate learning.

## Main criteria for effectiveness

- The programme is based on a thorough evaluation of learning needs.
- Clear objectives have been set for the outcomes of the programme.
- Standards are set for the delivery of the programme.
- Success criteria and methods of measuring success have been established.
- A blend of learning and development methods are used – informal and formal – that are appropriate for the established needs of those taking part.
- The outcome of the programme is evaluated.

## Blended learning

Blended learning is the use of a combination of learning methods to increase the overall effectiveness of the learning process by providing for different parts of the learning mix to complement and support one another.

## Evaluation of learning

Evaluation is an integral feature of learning activities. In essence, it is the comparison of objectives with outcomes to answer the question of how far the event has achieved its purpose. The four levels of evaluation in the Kirkpatrick methodology are: 1) reaction, 2) evaluate learning, 3) evaluate behaviour, 4) evaluate results.

## Responsibility for learning

- While individuals should be expected to take a considerable degree of responsibility for managing their own learning, they need the help and support of their line managers and the organization, including the L&D function.
- Line managers have a key role in planning and facilitating learning by conducting performance and development reviews, agreeing learning contracts and personal development plans with their staff, and helping staff to implement those plans through the provision of learning opportunities and coaching.
- Learning and development professionals have to become learning facilitators rather than simply training providers or instructors.

## Questions

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- 1 What overall approach should be adopted to learning and development?
- 2 Why is the identification of learning needs so important?
- 3 What methods are available for identifying learning needs?
- 4 What is workplace learning?
- 5 What is a personal development plan?
- 6 When is training justified?
- 7 What constitute effective training practices?
- 8 How should learning and development events and programmes be planned?
- 9 What is blended learning?
- 10 What are the four levels of Kirkpatrick's learning evaluation methodology?

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# 24

## Leadership and management development

### KEY CONCEPTS AND TERMS

Action learning	Leadership development
Development centre	Management
Leadership	Management development
Leadership and management development	Management succession planning
	Outdoor learning

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

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On completing this chapter you should be able to define these key concepts. You should also understand:

- The nature of leadership and management development
- The nature of leadership and management
- Leadership and management development compared
- Leadership development
- Management development
- Formal approaches to management development
- Informal approaches to management development
- The role of the organization
- The role of the individual
- The role of HR and L&D specialists
- The criteria for leadership and management

## Introduction

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This chapter is about what organizations can do to develop effective leaders and managers, bearing in mind the point made by Drucker (1955: 158) that: ‘The prosperity if not the survival of any business depends on the performance of its managers of tomorrow.’

The chapter starts with a definition of leadership and management development. This leads to a discussion of the nature of leadership and management as a basis for an analysis of what leadership and management development programmes might cover and an examination of the extent, if at all, to which leadership development and management development programmes are different. The conclusion is reached that while they are closely associated, and indeed may be conducted jointly, they are sufficiently different to justify being examined separately, which is undertaken in the next two sections of the chapter.

## Leadership and management development defined

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Leadership and management development programmes provide for managers to have the leadership and managerial qualities required to achieve success. They form a vital ingredient in talent management, in association with the career planning and career management activities described in Chapter 20. A blended learning approach is used, which combines a number of learning activities such as planned experience, self-directed learning, coaching, mentoring, action learning, outdoor learning and formal education and training in programmes based on an analysis of learning needs.

## The nature of leadership and management

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There has been much debate on how leadership differs from management. The problem is that leadership involves management and management involves leadership so that it may be difficult to separate the two. There is some consensus on the essential

nature of both and the skills involved, as set out below, but there is more disagreement on which is the most important.

### Leadership

Leadership means inspiring people to do their best to achieve a desired result. It involves developing and communicating a vision for the future, motivating people and securing their engagement. As defined by Dixon (1994: 214): ‘Leadership is no more than exercising such an influence upon others that they tend to act in concert towards achieving a goal which they might not have achieved so readily had they been left to their own devices.’ Leadership skills include the ability to:

- inspire others;
- persuade others willingly to behave differently;
- clarify what needs to be done and why;
- communicate a sense of purpose to the team;
- understand, as established by research conducted by Tamkin *et al* (2010), that leaders cannot create performance themselves but are conduits for performance through their influence on others;
- get the team into action so that the task is achieved.

### Management

The word ‘management’ is derived from the Italian verb *maneggiare*, which means ‘to handle a horse’. This definition at least states that to manage is to have charge of or responsibility for something, but there is clearly more to it than that. Management has often been defined as ‘getting things done through people’, thus emphasizing its leadership component. But managers are also responsible for guiding and controlling the business or their part of it by managing their other resources – finance, work systems and technology. Management could therefore be defined as deciding what to do and then getting it done through the effective use of resources.

Research by Tamkin *et al* (2003) established that the abilities managers need are:

- to empower and develop people – understand and practise the process of delivering through the capability of others;

- manage people and performance – managers increasingly need to maintain morale while also maximizing performance;
- work across boundaries, engaging with others, working as a member of a team, thinking differently about problems and their solutions;
- develop relationships and a focus on the customer, building partnerships with both internal and external customers;
- balance technical and generic skills – the technical aspects of management and the management of human relationships.

This list emphasizes the leadership component of management. However, managers are primarily there to get results by ensuring that their function, unit or department operates effectively. They manage people and their other resources, which include time and themselves. They are accountable for attaining goals, having been given authority over those working in their unit or department.

The traditional model of what managers do is that it is a logical and systematic process of planning, organizing, motivating and controlling. But this is misleading. Managers often carry out their work on a day-to-day basis in conditions of variety, turbulence and unpredictability. Managers may have to be specialists in ambiguity, with the ability to cope with conflicting and unclear requirements.

Managers are doers. They deal with events as they occur. But they must also be concerned with where they are going. This requires strategic thinking, especially at higher levels. As strategic thinkers, managers develop a sense of purpose and frameworks for defining intentions and future directions. They are engaged in the process of strategic management.

### **What are the differences?**

Are leadership and management the same or different? Some commentators regard leadership as synonymous with management; others see them as distinct but closely linked and equally necessary activities; others consider management to be a subset of leadership; and yet others praise leadership and demonize management. Bennis (1989) viewed managers as those who promote efficiency, follow the

rules and accept the status quo, while leaders focus on challenging the rules and promoting effectiveness. Kotter (1991) saw managers as being the ones who plan, budget, organize and control, while leaders set direction, manage change and motivate people. Hersey and Blanchard (1998) claimed that management merely consists of leadership applied to business situations; or in other words, management forms a subset of the broader process of leadership.

But as Birkinshaw (2010: 23) commented: ‘By dichotomizing the work of executives in this way, Kotter, Bennis and others squeezed out the essence of what managers do and basically left them with the boring work that “leaders” don’t want.’ His view on the leadership-versus-management debate was that: ‘Leadership is a process of social influence, concerned with the traits, styles and behaviours of individuals that cause others to follow them. Management is the act of getting people together to accomplish desired goals. To put it simply, we all need to be both leaders and managers’ (ibid: 23). Burgoyne (2010: 42) observed that: ‘Both [management and leadership] are needed and need to work closely together, often through the same person or team.’ Earlier, Mintzberg (2004: 22) summed it all up (as he often did) when he wrote: ‘Let’s stop the dysfunctional separation of leadership from management. We all know that managers who don’t lead are boring, dispiriting. Well, leaders who don’t manage are distant, disconnected.’

## **Leadership and management development compared**

In some quarters the term ‘leadership development’ has replaced ‘management development’, perhaps because the importance of ensuring that people have leadership qualities has been recognized, while it is believed that they can be safely left to acquire management skills in other ways, eg experience. However, the two are different even though they are closely associated.

A rather simplistic way of differentiating the two is that leadership development tends to be concerned with nurturing the softer skills of leadership through various educational processes, including formal learning events and programmes and coaching. This is illustrated in the three case studies at the

end of the next section of this chapter. In contrast, management development relies more on ensuring that managers have the right sequence of experience, which may be supplemented by self-directed learning and courses on management techniques. Further guidance may be provided by coaching and from mentors. But management development programmes traditionally also cover leadership skills.

## Leadership development

It is sometimes said that leaders are born not made. This is a rather discouraging statement for those who are not leaders by birthright. It may be true to the extent that some exceptional people seem to be visionaries, have built-in charisma and a natural ability to impose their personality on others. However, even they probably have to develop and hone these qualities when confronted with a situation demanding leadership. Ordinary mortals need not despair: they too can build on their natural capacities and develop their leadership abilities. As Burgoyne (2010: 42) wisely observed: 'The will to lead is largely innate but the ability to do it well is largely learnt.'

As defined by Burgoyne (2010: 43): 'Leadership development in the widest sense involves the acquisition, development and utilization of leadership capability or the potential for it.' Leadership development programmes prepare people for leadership roles and situations beyond their current experience. The essential elements of leadership development, as suggested by Bolden (2010: 129), are reflection, practice, self-awareness, personal support, opportunities to apply learning and relevance to work.

Burgoyne (2010: 44) identified the following leadership development activities:

- job/work placements with leadership capability development as one of the purposes;
- education, training and development of individuals including the 'context sensitive' methods of coaching, mentoring and more formal education, training and development programmes;
- 'soft' organization development processes including culture change, team building and 'hearts and minds' collective mission/values-creating initiatives.

Yukl (2006) proposed the following conditions for successful leadership development:

- clear learning objectives;
- clear, meaningful content;
- appropriate sequencing of content;
- appropriate mix of training methods;
- opportunity for active practice;
- relevant, timely feedback;
- high trainee confidence;
- appropriate follow-up activities.

But it is not all about subjecting leaders to development programmes. The organization has to play its part in ensuring that leaders are provided with the support and the working conditions they need to carry out their role properly. As Fiedler (1967: 276) emphasized: 'If we wish to increase organizational and group effectiveness we must learn not only to train leaders more effectively but also to build an organizational environment in which the leaders can perform well.'



## CASE STUDIES

### Cargill

Cargill is an international provider of food, agricultural and risk management products and services. Those in Cargill's different talent pools, such as the 'Next Generation Leaders' and 'Emerging Leaders' undertake both formal and informal development. In Cargill's high-performance Leadership Academy, entrants learn about the fundamentals of leadership and management in the company and work through a number of accelerated leadership modules,

gaining the knowledge to enable them to lead Cargill businesses. All of these courses are interspersed with more challenging projects and work assignments. Cargill corporate leaders also take part in the Leadership Academy, where they learn transformational leadership skills and the essentials of coaching and mentoring in formal programmes and informal learning activities, all of which form an important part of their leadership development.

### Diageo

At Diageo, the international beverages company, a series of development strategies, particularly for leadership, have been based on Diageo's five values, which were created as the common heartbeat of all the component businesses. The values – 'Be the best', 'Passionate about consumers', 'Proud of what we do', 'Freedom to succeed' and 'Valuing each other' – have become central to Diageo's success, alongside a comprehensive performance management framework. Conversations about performance are now on a 'partnership' basis, where managers, with their employees, are expected to discuss the latter's aspirations and how their growth needs can be satisfied by the business.

The company's first leadership development programme, 1998's 'Building Diageo talent', was designed to help link strategy and organizational performance with individual performance. This had many components, including coaching and benchmarking for leadership development for 4,000 managers. Over the past six years the company's leadership training has evolved to focus more on building 'a core Diageo mindset'. The senior team has prioritized developing a 'total talent strategy' and HR processes have been thoroughly embedded in management thinking worldwide.

### HML

As described by Spackman (2010), at HML (a financial services company) the leadership development programme for middle and senior managers consisted of the following elements:

- individual 360-degree feedback;
- orientation event – introduction and contracting;
- action learning sets (sets of six people, three sets in one programme group);
- four modules: profit, client, effectiveness, engagement;
- big event – transformational residential learning;
- self-directed modules;
- individual 360-degree feedback – benchmark scores;
- accreditation and celebration event.

## Management development

Management development is concerned with improving the performance of managers in their present roles, preparing them to take on greater responsibilities in the future and also developing their leadership skills. It was defined by Baldwin and Patgett (1994), quoted by Peters (2010: 28), as: 'A complex process by which individuals learn to perform effectively in a management role.' A systematic approach to management development is necessary to meet the needs of organizations for the talented managers they require and because the increasingly onerous demands made on line managers mean that they have to possess a wider range of developed skills than ever before.

The object of management development is to find ways in which the company can produce, mainly from within, a supply of managers better equipped for their jobs at all levels. The principal method of doing this is to ensure that managers gain the right sequence and variety of experience, in good time, that will equip them for whatever level of responsibility they have the ability to reach in the course of their career. This experience can be supplemented – but never replaced – by courses carefully timed and designed to meet particular needs. Management development policies involve the use of both formal and informal approaches.

### **Formal approaches to management development**

Formal approaches to management development consist of processes and events that are planned and provided by the organization. These should be based on the identification of development needs. The methods of defining learning needs described in Chapter 23 can be used to determine collective needs. For individuals, performance management reviews are an important means of producing personal development plans and learning contracts, also described in Chapter 23. This can be done more systematically at development centres. These consist of a concentrated (usually one or two days) programme of exercises, tests and interviews designed to identify managers' development needs and to provide counselling on their careers. Competency

frameworks can be used as a means of identifying and expressing development needs and pointing the way to self-managed learning programmes or the provision of learning opportunities by the organization.

The formal approaches that can be used are:

- planned experience – which includes job rotation, job enlargement, taking part in project teams or task groups and secondment outside the organization – this is possibly the most effective approach on the grounds that managers learn to manage mainly by managing;
- coaching – a personal and usually one-to-one approach to helping people develop their skills and levels of competence (coaching skills are dealt with in Chapter 52);
- mentoring – the process of using specially selected and trained individuals (mentors) to provide guidance, pragmatic advice and continuing support that will help the person or persons allocated to them to learn and develop (see also Chapter 52);
- action learning – a method of helping managers develop their talents by exposing them to real problems; they are required to analyse them, formulate recommendations and then take action;
- outdoor learning – getting teams of participants to carry out physical activities so that they can learn about how they act under pressure as team leaders or team members;
- the use of performance management processes to provide feedback and satisfy development needs; these would be competency-based in the sense that they would specify the competencies required and assess the degree to which individuals needed to develop those competencies;
- training by means of internal or external courses;
- structured self-development following a self-directed learning programme set out in a personal development plan and agreed as a learning contract with the manager or a management development adviser.

## **Informal approaches to management development**

Informal approaches to management development make use of the learning experiences managers encounter during the course of their everyday work. Managers are learning every time they are confronted with an unusual problem, an unfamiliar task or a move to a different job. They then have to evolve new ways of dealing with the situation. They will learn if they reflect on what they did, in order to determine how and why it contributed to success or failure. This retrospective or reflective learning will be effective if managers can apply it successfully in the future.

Managers also learn from their managers. This may include how not to do things as well as what to do. Again, they will learn more if they have the capacity to reflect on what they have learnt and apply it to their own circumstances.

Experiential and reflective learning is potentially the most powerful form of learning. It comes naturally to some managers. They seem to absorb, unconsciously and by some process of osmosis, the lessons from their experience, although in fact they have probably developed a capacity for almost instantaneous analysis, which they store in their mental databank to retrieve when necessary.

But many managers either find it difficult to do this sort of analysis or do not recognize the need. This is where informal or at least semi-formal approaches can be used to encourage and help managers to learn more effectively. These comprise:

- emphasizing self-assessment and the identification of development needs by getting managers to assess their own performance against agreed objectives and analyse the factors that contributed to effective or less effective performance – this can be provided through performance management;
- getting managers to produce their own personal development plans – self-directed learning programmes;
- encouraging managers to discuss their problems and opportunities with their manager, colleagues or mentors to establish for themselves what they need to learn or be able to do;
- helping managers to understand their own learning styles so that they can make the best use of their experience and increase the effectiveness of their learning activities (this guidance may have to be provided more formally).

## **The role of the organization**

The traditional view is that the organization need not concern itself with management development. The natural process of selection and the pressure of competition will ensure the survival of the fittest. Managers, in fact, are born not made. Cream rises to the top (but then so does scum). Management development has also been seen as a formal process using management inventories, multicoloured replacement charts, ‘Cook’s tours’ around different departments for newly recruited graduates, detailed job rotation programmes, elaborate points schemes to appraise personal characteristics, and lots of formal courses operating on the ‘sheep-dip’ principle (ie everyone undergoes them).

The true role of the organization in management development lies somewhere between these two extremes: on the one hand, it is not enough, in conditions of rapid growth (when they exist) and change, to leave everything to chance – to trial and error; on the other hand, elaborate management development programmes cannot successfully be imposed on the organization. A mix of formal and informal methods is required that has to fit the organization’s context and specific requirements.

The success of any management development programme depends upon the degree to which there is commitment to it at all levels of management. It is not a separate activity to be handed over to a specialist and forgotten or ignored. The development of subordinates must be recognized as a natural and essential part of any manager’s job. But the lead must come from the top.

## **The role of the individual**

As Drucker perceptively wrote many years ago (1955: 162): ‘Development is always self-development. Nothing could be more absurd than for the enterprise to assume responsibility for the development of a man. The responsibility rests with the

individual, his abilities, his efforts.’ But he went on to say:

Every manager in a business has the opportunity to encourage individual self-development or to stifle it, to direct it or to misdirect it. He should be specifically assigned the responsibility for helping all men working with him to focus, direct and apply their self-development efforts productively. And every company can provide systematic development challenges to its managers. (ibid: 163)

The ability to manage is eventually something individuals mainly develop for themselves while carrying out their normal duties. But they will do this much better if they are given encouragement, guidance and opportunities by their organization and their managers. In McGregor’s (1960: 192) vivid phrase: managers are grown – they are neither born nor made: ‘The individual will grow into what he is capable of becoming, providing we can create the proper conditions for that growth.’

### ***The role of HR and learning and development specialists***

However, HR and L&D specialists still have an important role to play. They interpret the needs of the business and advise on how management development as a business-led activity can play its part in meeting these needs. They encourage managers to

carry out their developmental activities, providing guidance as required, and they act as coaches or mentors. They also, of course, conduct or manage formal learning events and programmes, but their most important role is to help in developing a climate in which managers can grow.

## **Criteria for leadership and management development**

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The effectiveness and value of any approach to management development include the extent to which it:

- links to organizational goals and context – and so has relevance for the organization as well as for individuals;
- builds on and develops the qualities, skills and attitudes of participants;
- is supported by appropriate HR policies to do with recruitment and selection, talent management, succession planning and reward;
- has the full commitment of those responsible for the operation of the process, including line managers;
- is motivating to those encouraged to participate in it.

## Key learning points: Leadership and management development

Leadership and management development defined

Leadership and management development programmes ensure that managers have the leadership and managerial qualities required to achieve success.

Leadership

Leadership means inspiring people to do their best to achieve a desired result. It involves developing and communicating a vision for the future, motivating people and securing their engagement.

Management

Defined as deciding what to do and then getting it done through the effective use of resources.

Leadership development compared with management development

Leadership development tends to be concerned with nurturing the softer skills of leadership through various educational processes, including formal learning events and programmes and coaching.

Management development relies more on ensuring that managers have the right sequence of experience, which may be supplemented by self-directed learning and courses on management techniques. Further guidance may be provided by coaching and from mentors. Management

development programmes traditionally also cover leadership skills.

Leadership development

Leadership development programmes prepare people for leadership roles and situations beyond their current experience.

Management development

Management development is concerned with improving the performance of managers in their present roles, preparing them to take on greater responsibilities in the future and also developing their leadership skills.

Formal approaches to management development consist of processes and events planned and provided by the organization. They include planned experience, coaching and mentoring, action learning, outdoor learning, performance management, formal training and structured self-development.

Informal approaches to management development make use of the learning experiences that managers encounter during the course of their everyday work.

Responsibility for management development

Individual managers are largely responsible for their own development but need guidance, support and encouragement from their own managers and the HR function.

## Questions

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- 1 What is the aim of leadership and management development?
- 2 What is leadership?
- 3 What is management?
- 4 What is the difference between leadership development and management development?
- 5 What is leadership development?
- 6 What are the main features of a leadership development programme?
- 7 What is management development?
- 8 What formal approaches can be adopted to management development?
- 9 What is action learning?
- 10 What informal approaches can be adopted to management development?

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# PART VI

## Performance and reward

### PART VI CONTENTS

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- 25 Performance management
- 26 Reward management – strategy and systems
- 27 The practice of reward management
- 28 Managing reward for special groups

### Introduction

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Performance is concerned with how well something is done and reward is with how people should be recognized for doing it. Performance management and reward management are closely associated topics that play an important part in achieving one of the key goals of HRM – to contribute to the development of a high-performance culture. This is understood by the CIPD, which in its profession map (2013) defines what an HR or reward professional needs to do about performance and reward as follows: ‘Builds a high performance culture by delivering programmes that recognize and reward critical skills, capabilities, experience and performance and ensures that reward systems are market-based, equitable and cost-effective.’

The aim of this part is to explore the relationship between performance and reward and how in concert they contribute to the achievement of business goals. It is concerned with: 1) performance management, defined as a systematic process for improving individual, team and organizational performance;

2) reward management, defined as the processes of deciding how people should be rewarded and of ensuring that reward policies and practices are implemented.

Performance is defined as behaviour that accomplishes results. Performance management influences performance by helping people to understand what good performance means and by providing the information needed to improve it. Reward management influences performance by recognizing and rewarding good performance and by providing incentives to improve it.

The part covers: 1) a description of the process of performance management; 2) an analysis of reward management in terms of the basis of reward strategy (strategic reward) and a description of the constituents of a reward system; 3) an examination of the process of reward management, dealing with the main reward activities of job evaluation, market pricing, base pay management, contingent pay, employee benefits; 4) rewarding special groups (executives, knowledge workers, sales and customer service staff and manual workers).

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# 25

## Performance management

### KEY CONCEPTS AND TERMS

Objectives	Personal development
Performance appraisal	planning
Performance management	360-degree feedback

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

On completing this chapter you should be able to define these key concepts. You should also know about:

- The meaning of performance
- The theories underpinning performance management
- Principles of performance management
- The aims of performance management
- The performance management cycle
- Performance planning
- Managing performance throughout the year
- Reviewing performance
- Assessing performance
- Performance management issues
- The impact of performance management on performance
- Performance management and reward
- 360-degree feedback systems
- Introducing performance management

## Introduction

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As defined by Aguinis (2005: 2): ‘Performance management is a continuous process of identifying, measuring and developing the performance of individuals and teams and aligning performance with the strategic goals of the organization.’ Its five elements are agreement, measurement, feedback, positive reinforcement and dialogue.

Cappelli (2008: 196) wrote that: ‘When employees fail in their jobs, part of the organization also fails.’ Performance management aims to eliminate or at least significantly reduce this possibility. Pulakos (2009: 3) emphasized that: ‘Performance management is the key process through which work gets done. It’s how organizations communicate expectations and drive behaviour to achieve important goals; it’s also about how organizations identify ineffective performers for development programmes or other personnel actions.’

The earliest mention of performance management in the literature was made by Warren (1972). Another early reference to performance management was made by Beer and Ruh (1976). Their thesis was that ‘performance is best developed through practical challenges and experiences on the job with guidance and feedback from superiors’. Performance management developed out of merit rating, which originated in the early 20th century and was influenced by the scientific management movement. This was followed by performance appraisal and management by objectives. But it is said that the first known use of merit rating took place during the Wei dynasty (AD 221–265) when the emperor employed an ‘imperial rater’ whose task it was to evaluate the performance of officials.

Today, the term performance management as an overall description of a process of performance planning and review conducted by managers and individuals has largely replaced the term performance appraisal. The latter has often been relegated to a description of the performance assessment and rating aspect of performance management. Indeed, there are those, including the writers of this handbook, who prefer to avoid the use of the phrase performance appraisal altogether because of its connotations with the worst aspects of traditional merit rating, ie a top-down pronouncement by managers on what they think of their subordinates, which is used as an instrument for command and control. We prefer

‘performance review’, which signifies that performance management is a joint affair, based on dialogue and agreement.

As considered initially in this chapter, performance management is founded on an understanding of what the word ‘performance’ means and is underpinned by a number of behavioural theories. It is also based on a number of principles that have emerged from experience in operating it. The chapter continues with a definition of the aims of performance management and an examination of a conceptual model of performance management consisting of the plan-act-monitor-review cycle. The problems of making this concept work are then explored and the chapter ends with analyses of the impact of performance management on performance and reward, a description of a special type of performance management: 360-degree feedback, or multisource assessment, and notes for guidance on introducing performance management.

## The basis of performance management

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Performance management should be based on an understanding of what the word ‘performance’ means. Those concerned with introducing and operating performance management should be aware of the underpinning theories and the principles evolved by practitioners from their experience.

### *The meaning of performance*

Performance is defined as behaviour that accomplishes results. As noted by Brumbach (1988: 387):

Performance means both behaviours and results. Behaviours emanate from the performer and transform performance from abstraction to action. Not just the instruments for results, behaviours are also outcomes in their own right – the product of mental and physical effort applied to tasks – and can be judged apart from results.

Brumbach observed that because of the significance of behaviour there was more to success or failure than whether results were achieved: ‘Success is not always positive nor failure always negative’ (ibid: 388). This concept of performance leads to the

conclusion that when assessing and rewarding the performance of individuals a number of factors have to be considered including both outputs (results) and inputs (behaviour).

Any attempt to manage performance should also bear in mind that it is a complicated notion. Campbell (1990) suggested that performance is the outcome of three determinants:

- 1 knowledge about facts and things (termed declarative knowledge);
- 2 knowledge about how things are done and the skills to do them (termed procedural knowledge and skills);
- 3 motivation to act, to expend effort and to persist (termed motivation).

### Underpinning theories

The following three theories underpin performance management.

#### Goal theory

Goal theory, as developed by Latham and Locke (1979), highlights four mechanisms that connect goals to performance outcomes: 1) they direct attention to priorities; 2) they stimulate effort; 3) they challenge people to bring their knowledge and skills to bear to increase their chances of success; and 4) the more challenging the goal, the more people will draw on their full repertoire of skills. This theory supports the emphasis in performance management on setting and agreeing objectives against which performance can be measured and managed.

#### Control theory

Control theory focuses attention on feedback as a means of shaping behaviour. As people receive feedback on their behaviour they appreciate the discrepancy between what they are doing and what they are expected to do and take corrective action to overcome the discrepancy. Feedback is recognized as a crucial part of performance management processes.

#### Social cognitive theory

Social cognitive theory was developed by Bandura (1986). It is based on his central concept of self-efficacy. This suggests that what people believe they

can or cannot do powerfully impacts on their performance. Developing and strengthening positive self-belief in employees is therefore an important performance management objective.

### Principles of performance management

The research conducted by Armstrong and Baron (1998, 2004) identified the following 10 principles of performance management as stated by practitioners:

- 1 It's about how we manage people – it's not a system.
- 2 Performance management is what managers do: a natural process of management.
- 3 A management tool that helps managers to manage.
- 4 Driven by corporate purpose and values.
- 5 To obtain solutions that work.
- 6 Only interested in things you can do something about and get a visible improvement.
- 7 Focus on changing behaviour rather than paperwork.
- 8 Based on accepted principle but operates flexibly.
- 9 Focus on development not pay.
- 10 Success depends on what the organization is and needs to be in its performance culture.

### Aims of performance management

Performance management is a means of getting better results by providing the means for individuals to perform well within an agreed framework of planned goals, standards and competency requirements. It involves developing a shared understanding about what is to be achieved and how it is to be achieved. The aim is to develop the capacity of people to meet and exceed expectations and to achieve their full potential to the benefit of themselves and the organization. A further aim is to clarify how individuals are expected to contribute to the achievement

of organization goals by aligning individual objectives with the strategic objectives of the organization.

Performance management provides the basis for self-development but, importantly, it is also about ensuring that the support and guidance people need to develop and improve are readily available. Performance management can play an important role in rewarding employees by providing them with positive feedback and the recognition of their accomplishments.

Performance management is often seen as primarily a developmental process and may therefore be referred to as ‘performance and development management’. It can also be used to generate ratings that inform performance pay decisions.

Shields (2007: 24) explained that a performance management system has a fourfold purpose:

- 1 Strategic communication – convey to people what doing a good job means and entails.
- 2 Relationship building – create stronger work relationships by bringing managers and those they manage together regularly to review performance achievements.
- 3 Employee development – provide performance feedback as a basis for the joint analysis of strengths, weaknesses and areas for improvement and an agreement on a personal development plan and learning contract.
- 4 Employee evaluation – assess the performance of employees (performance appraisal) as a basis for making decisions on job reassignment, promotion or performance-related reward.

Shields noted that: ‘the relationship between the developmental and evaluative purposes is frequently a troubled one and maintaining a harmonious relationship between the two is undoubtedly one of the greatest challenges that awaits the unsuspecting human resource manager’ (ibid: 25).

Respondents to an e-reward survey in 2005 identified the following performance management objectives:

- Align individual and organizational objectives – 64 per cent.
- Improve organizational performance – 63 per cent.
- Improve individual performance – 46 per cent.

- Provide the basis for personal development – 37 per cent.
- Develop a performance culture – 32 per cent.
- Inform contribution/performance pay decisions – 21 per cent.

Note the relatively small emphasis on pay.

The following is a statement of objectives from one respondent to the e-reward survey: ‘To support culture change by creating a performance culture and reinforcing the values of the organization with an emphasis on the importance of these in getting a balance between “what” is delivered and “how” it is delivered.’

## The performance management cycle

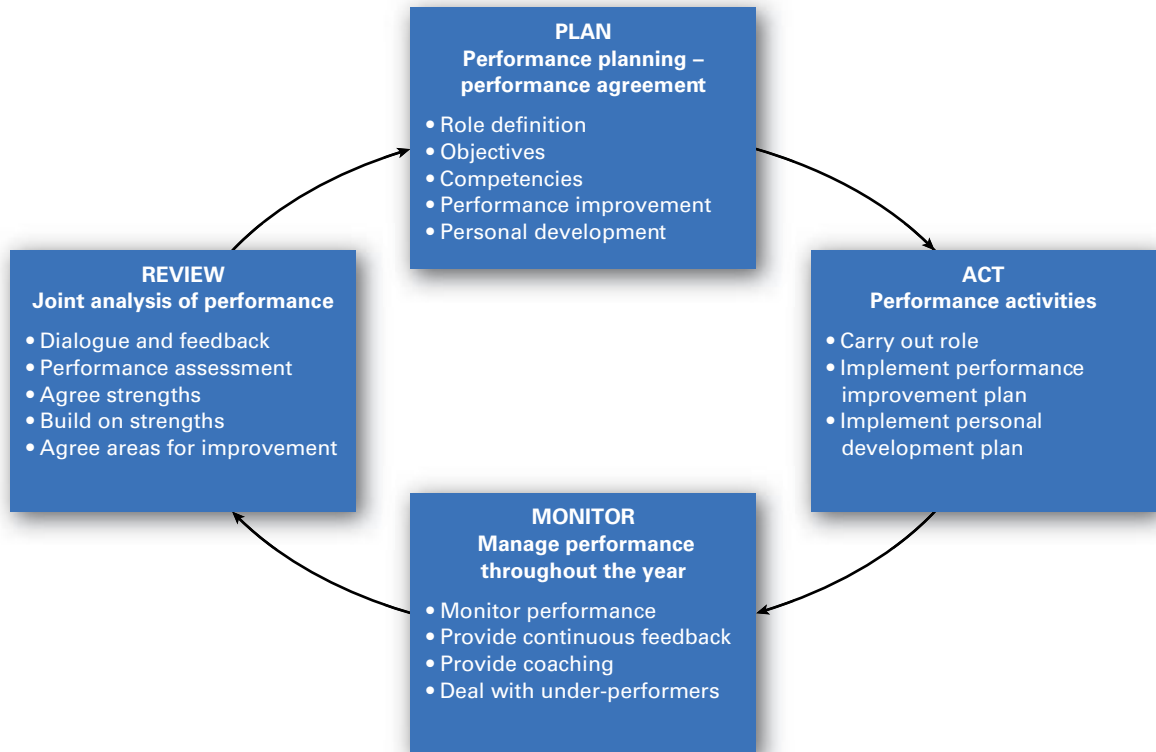
Performance management is a natural process of management: it is not an HRM technique or tool. As a natural process of management the performance management cycle, as modelled in Figure 25.1, corresponds with Deming’s (1986) plan-do-check-act model.

The processes of performance planning, managing performance, performance reviews, performance assessment recording the agreement and review, and the use of web-enabled technology involved during the cycle are described below.

### Performance planning

Performance planning is based on performance agreements. Expectations are defined generally in role profiles that specify key result areas; the knowledge, skills and abilities (KSAs) required and the behavioural competencies needed to perform well. What has to be accomplished in key result areas can be defined in the form of objectives or targets. An important aspect of performance planning is the process of aligning individual goals with the strategic goals of the organization.

The acronym ‘SMART’ is often used to define a good objective. Traditionally, S stands for specific (sometimes ‘stretching’), M for measurable, A for agreed, R for realistic and T for time-related. But as Chamberlin (2011: 26) argued, ‘the real aim of setting

**FIGURE 25.1** The performance management cycle

objectives is for people to know exactly what it is they have to do, when they've done it, that they are able to do it, why they have to do it (ie who for) and that it is something they should be doing, and how they are progressing along the way'. Following Blanchard (1989) he suggested that the last three letters of the mnemonic should be amended to read A for attainable, R for relevant and T for trackable. He attached particular importance first to 'relevant', meaning that the objective is to do with the business and its customers. Second, he emphasized 'trackable' because the important thing to do with objectives is to monitor progress over time, ie track it (he rejected 'time-related' because it did not convey this essential feature and was in any case covered already by 'specific').

Performance agreements emerge from the analysis of role requirements and the performance review. An assessment of past performance leads to an analysis of future requirements. The two processes can take place at the same meeting.

Agreement is reached at this stage on how performance will be measured and the evidence that will be used to establish levels of competency. It is important that these measures and evidence requirements should be identified and fully agreed now because they will be used by individuals as well as managers to demonstrate and monitor achievements. The manager and the individual also agree on what the latter needs to do to achieve objectives, raise standards and improve performance.

The agreement may incorporate a personal development plan that provides a learning action programme, which individuals are expected to follow with the support of their managers and the organization. It may include formal training but, more importantly, it will incorporate a wider set of learning and development activities such as self-managed learning, coaching, mentoring, project work and e-learning. If multisource assessment (360-degree feedback) is practised in the organization this will be used to discuss development needs.

## Managing performance throughout the year

Perhaps one of the most important features of performance management is that it is a continuous process that reflects normal good management practices of setting direction, monitoring and measuring performance and taking action accordingly. Performance management should not be imposed on managers as something 'special' they have to do. It should instead be treated as a natural function that all good managers carry out.

This approach contrasts with that used in conventional performance appraisal systems, which were usually built around an annual event – the formal review – which tended to dwell on the past. This was carried out at the behest of the personnel department, often perfunctorily, and then forgotten. Managers proceeded to manage without any further reference to the outcome of the review, and the appraisal form was buried in the personnel records system. However, formal reviews that include assessments of performance, as described below, are essential parts of the performance management cycle.

## The performance review

A performance review provides a focal point for the consideration of key performance and development issues. The performance review meeting is the means through which the five primary performance management elements of agreement, measurement, feedback, positive reinforcement and dialogue can be put to good use. It leads to the completion of the performance management cycle by informing performance agreements. It involves some form of assessment, as considered in the next section of this chapter.

The review should be rooted in the reality of the individual's performance. It is concrete, not abstract, and it allows managers and individuals to take a positive look together at how performance can become better in the future and how any problems in meeting performance standards and achieving objectives can be resolved. Individuals should be encouraged to assess their own performance and become active agents for change in improving their results. Managers should be encouraged to adopt their proper enabling role: coaching and providing support and guidance.

There should be no surprises in a formal review if performance issues have been dealt with as they should have been – as they arise during the year. Traditional performance appraisals were often no more than an analysis of where those involved are now, and where they have come from. This static and historical approach is not what performance management is about. The true role of performance management is to look forward to what needs to be done by people to achieve the purpose of the job; to meet new challenges; to make even better use of their knowledge, skills and abilities; to develop their capabilities by establishing a self-managed learning agenda; and to reach agreement on any areas where performance needs to be improved and how that improvement should take place. This process also helps managers to improve their ability to lead, guide and develop the individuals and teams for whom they are responsible.

There are 12 golden rules for conducting performance review meetings:

- 1 *Be prepared.* Managers should prepare by referring to a list of agreed objectives and their notes on performance throughout the year. They should form views about the reasons for success or failure and decide where to give praise, which performance problems should be mentioned and what steps might be undertaken to overcome them. Thought should also be given to any changes that have taken place or are contemplated in the individual's role, and to work and personal objectives for the next period. Individuals should also prepare in order to identify achievements and problems, and to be ready to assess their own performance at the meeting. They should also note any points they wish to raise about their work and prospects.
- 2 *Work to a clear structure.* The meeting should be planned to cover all the points identified during preparation. Sufficient time should be allowed for a full discussion – hurried meetings will be ineffective. An hour or two is usually necessary to get maximum value from the review.
- 3 *Create the right atmosphere.* A successful meeting depends on creating an informal environment in which a full, frank but friendly exchange of views can take place. It is best to start with a fairly general discussion before getting into any detail.



- 4 *Provide good feedback.* Individuals need to know how they are getting on. Feedback should be based on factual evidence. It refers to results, events, critical incidents and significant behaviours that have affected performance in specific ways. The feedback should be presented in a manner that enables individuals to recognize and accept its factual nature – it should be a description of what has happened, not a judgement. Positive feedback should be given on the things that the individual did well in addition to areas for improvement. People are more likely to work at improving their performance and developing their skills if they feel empowered by the process.
- 5 *Use time productively.* The reviewer should test understanding, obtain information, and seek proposals and support. Time should be allowed for the individual to express his or her views fully and to respond to any comments made by the manager. The meeting should take the form of a dialogue between two interested and involved parties, both of whom are seeking a positive conclusion.
- 6 *Use praise.* If possible, managers should begin with praise for some specific achievement, but this should be sincere and deserved. Praise helps people to relax – everyone needs encouragement and appreciation.
- 7 *Let individuals do most of the talking.* This enables them to get things off their chest and helps them to feel that they are getting a fair hearing. Use open-ended questions (ie questions that invite the individual to think about what to reply rather than indicating the expected answer). This is to encourage people to expand.
- 8 *Invite self-assessment.* This is to see how things look from the individual's point of view and to provide a basis for discussion – many people underestimate themselves.
- 9 *Discuss performance not personality.* Discussions on performance should be based on factual evidence, not opinion. Always refer to actual events or behaviour and to results compared with agreed performance measures. Individuals should be given plenty of scope to explain why something did or did not happen.
- 10 *Encourage analysis of performance.* Don't just hand out praise or blame. Analyse jointly and objectively why things went well or badly and what can be done to maintain a high standard or to avoid problems in the future.
- 11 *Don't deliver unexpected criticisms.* The discussion should only be concerned with events or behaviours that have been noted at the time they took place. Feedback on performance should be immediate; it should not wait until the end of the year. The purpose of the formal review is to reflect briefly on experiences during the review period and, on this basis, to look ahead.
- 12 *Agree measurable objectives and a plan of action.* The aim should be to end the review meeting on a positive note.

These golden rules may sound straightforward and obvious enough but they will only function properly in a culture that supports this type of approach. This emphasizes the importance of getting and keeping top management support and the need to take special care in developing and introducing the system and in training managers and their staff.

## Performance assessment

Most performance management schemes include an assessment, which is usually carried out during or after a performance review meeting. This may be carried out by overall assessment, rating or visual assessment, as described below.

### Overall assessment

An overall assessment is based on a general analysis of performance under the headings of the performance agreement. The aim is to reach agreement about future action rather than to produce a summarized and potentially superficial judgement. Managers are expected to reach an understanding with each member of their team as a result of the analysis, which will ensure that the latter will appreciate how well or not so well they are doing. The analysis should also identify the high-flyers and those who are failing to meet acceptable standards. An overall assessment is recorded in a narrative consisting of a written summary of views about the level of performance achieved. This at least ensures that managers have to collect their thoughts together and put them

down on paper. But different people will consider different aspects of performance and there will be no consistency in the criteria used for assessment, so it is necessary to have a framework for the analysis. This could be provided on a 'what' and 'how' basis. The 'what' is the achievement of previously agreed objectives related to the headings on a role profile. The 'how' is behaviour in relating to competency framework headings. The results for each 'what' and 'how' heading could be recorded following a joint analysis during a review meeting.

One problem with this form of assessment, indeed any form of assessment, is that we can recognize people at either extreme (top performers and inadequate performers) but cannot accurately distinguish performance differences in the bulk of people lying between those extremes. What managers can do is to tell an individual that he or she has done exceptionally well and that they will therefore be included in the talent management programme, or managers can inform another individual that he or she has not done very well and that they must discuss what needs to be done about it. The others can be told that they are doing a perfectly good job and discussions can take place on how they can build on their strengths or on any learning activity (preferably self-directed) that might help them to do even better. Another problem with overall assessments is that they can be bland, superficial and overgeneralized. This is why many schemes use rating.

## Rating

Rating summarizes on a scale the views of the rater on the level of performance achieved. A rating scale is supposed to assist in making judgements and it enables those judgements to be categorized to inform performance- or contribution-pay decisions, or simply to produce an instant summary for the record of how well or not so well someone is doing.

Rating scales can be defined alphabetically (a, b, c, etc), or numerically (1, 2, 3, etc). Initials (ex for excellent, etc) are sometimes used in an attempt to disguise the hierarchical nature of the scale. The alphabetical or numerical points scale may be described adjectivally, for example, a = excellent, b = good, c = satisfactory and d = unsatisfactory. Alternatively, scale levels may be described verbally, as in the following example:

- Exceptional performance: exceeds expectations and consistently makes an outstanding contribution that significantly extends the impact and influence of the role.
- Well-balanced performance: meets objectives and requirements of the role, consistently performs in a thoroughly proficient manner.
- Barely effective performance: does not meet all objectives or role requirements of the role; significant performance improvements are needed.
- Unacceptable performance: fails to meet most objectives or requirements of the role; shows a lack of commitment to performance improvement or a lack of ability, which has been discussed prior to the performance review.

The e-reward 2005 survey of performance management found that overall ratings were used by 70 per cent of respondents. The most popular number of levels was five (43 per cent of respondents). However, some organizations settled for three levels. There is no evidence that any single approach is clearly superior to another, although the greater the number of levels the more is being asked of managers in the shape of discriminatory judgement. It is, however, preferable for level definitions to be positive rather than negative and for them to provide as much guidance as possible on the choice of ratings. It is equally important to ensure that level definitions are compatible with the culture of the organization and that close attention is given to ensuring that managers use them as consistently as possible.

The main problem with ratings is that they are largely subjective and it is difficult to achieve consistency between the ratings given by different managers. Because the notion of 'performance' is often unclear, subjectivity can increase. Even if objectivity is achieved, to sum up the total performance of a person with a single rating is a gross oversimplification of what may be a complex set of factors influencing that performance. To do this after a detailed discussion of strengths and weaknesses suggests that the rating will be a superficial and arbitrary judgement. To label people as 'average' or 'below average', or whatever equivalent terms are used, is both demeaning and demotivating.

The whole performance review session may be dominated by the fact that it will end with a rating, thus severely limiting the forward-looking and



developmental focus of the meeting, which is all important. This is particularly the case if the rating governs performance- or contribution-pay increases.

Another problem is that managers may inflate ratings to avoid confrontation with the individuals concerned. Some organizations (8 per cent of the respondents to the performance management survey conducted by Armstrong and Baron (2004)) attempted to counter this by using forced distribution, which requires conforming to a laid down distribution of ratings between different levels, for example: A = 5 per cent, B = 15 per cent, C = 60 per cent, D = 15 per cent and E = 5 per cent. This achieves consistency of a sort but managers and staff rightly resent being forced into this sort of straitjacket.

An alternative to forced distribution is forced ranking. It is most common in the United States where the outcome is sometimes known as a 'vitality curve'. Managers are required to place their staff in order from best to worst. The problem with forced ranking, as with forced distribution, is that the notion of performance may not be defined and is therefore not measurable. In the case of ranking it is therefore unclear what the resulting order of employees truly represents.

Some organizations, mainly in the United States, have gone as far as adopting the practice of annually terminating the employment of 5 to 10 per cent of the consistently lowest performers. This is referred to colloquially as 'rank and hank'. It is claimed that this practice 'raises the bar', ie it is said that it improves the overall level of performance in the business. There is no evidence that this is the case.

## Visual assessment

Visual assessment is an alternative to rating. This takes the form of an agreement between the manager and the individual on where the latter should be placed on a matrix or grid, as illustrated in Figure 25.2. The vertical axis of the grid in this example assesses the behavioural style adopted by the individual in carrying out the role, ie inputs. The elements of behaviour to be assessed would be defined in a competency framework and this would be amplified in schedules of what would be regarded as acceptable or unacceptable behaviour for each area of competency. The horizontal axis measures the level of business performance, ie outputs or what

the individual delivers. The assessment can place someone anywhere in one of the four quadrants according to behavioural style and delivery. Examples of possible actions are provided. A picture is thus provided of the individual's overall contribution, which is presented visually and as such provides a better basis for analysis and discussion than a mechanistic rating.

## Recording the performance agreement and review

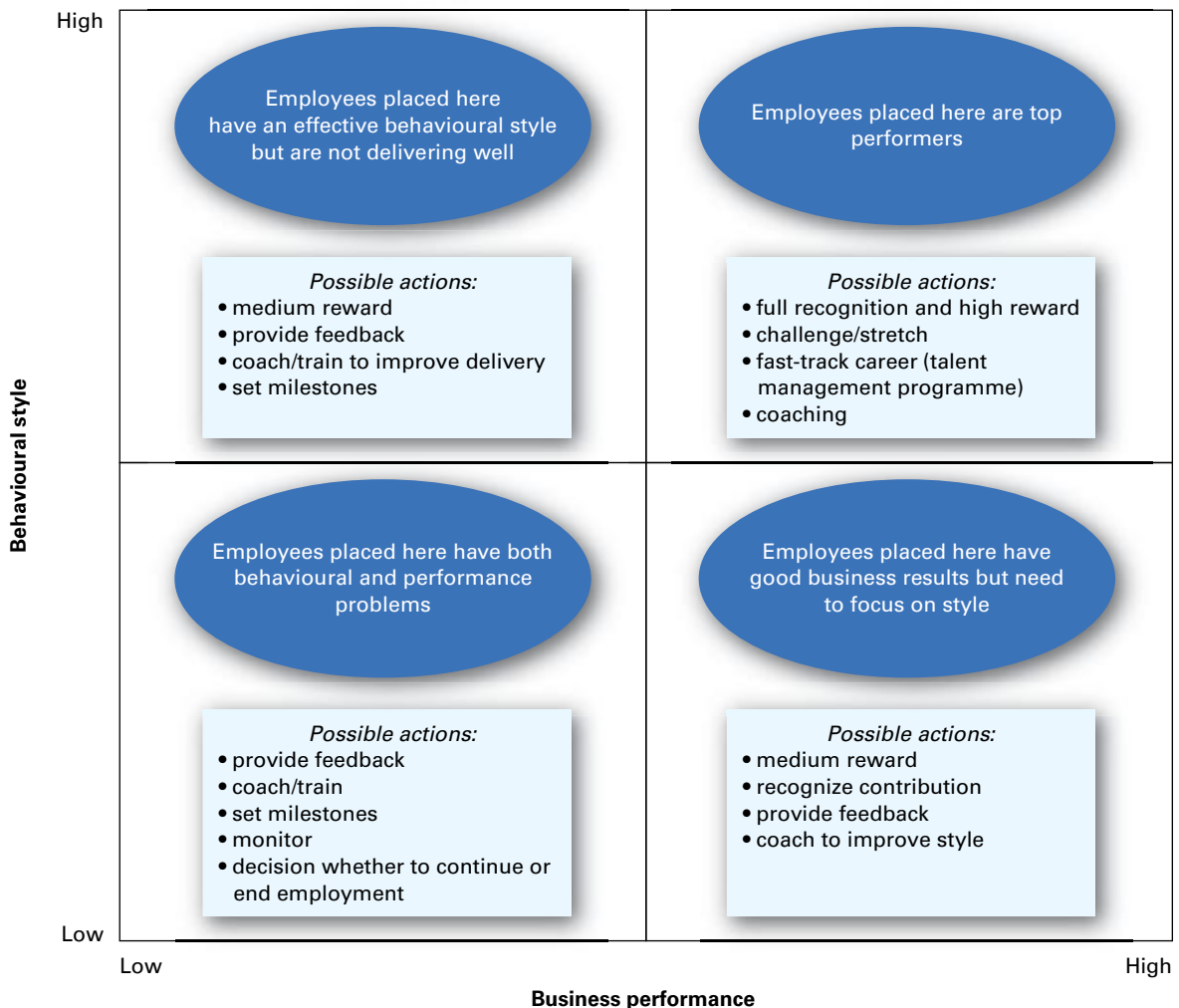
The performance agreement and outcomes of a review can be recorded on a performance management form. This should serve as a working document. It should be regularly used by managers and individuals as a reference document on objectives and plans when reviewing progress. It is a means of recording agreements on performance achievements and actions to be taken to improve performance or develop competence and skills. It should be dog-eared from much use – it should not be condemned to moulder away in a file. Examples of forms are given in Figures 25.3a and 25.3b.

## Web-enabled performance management

Web-enabled or online performance management makes it easier for managers and employees to record role profiles and performance agreements, monitor progress against the plans, access performance documents, and gather multisource (360-degree appraisal) comments. All this data can be used to assist in performance reviews and record further agreements emerging from the reviews. The aim is to reduce paperwork and simplify the process.

## Performance management issues

The many-faceted nature of performance was commented on as follows by Cascio (2010: 334): 'It is an exercise in observation and judgement, it is a feedback process, it is an organizational intervention. It is a measurement process as well as an intensely

**FIGURE 25.2** Visual performance assessment matrix

emotional process. Above all, it is an inexact, human process.'

As a human process, performance management can promise more than it achieves. Some years ago Keith Grint (1993: 62), referring to performance appraisal, asserted, famously, that: 'Rarely in the history of business can such a system have promised so much and delivered so little.' More recently, Shields (2007: 6) argued that: 'Ill-chosen, badly designed or poorly implemented performance management schemes can communicate entirely the wrong messages as to what the organization expects from its employees.' Coens and Jenkins (2002: 1) delivered the following judgement:

Throughout our work lives, most of us have struggled with performance appraisal. No matter how many times we redesign it, retrain the supervisors, or give it a new name, it never comes out right. Again and again, we see supervisors procrastinate or just go through the motions, with little taken to heart. And the supervisors who do take it to heart and give it their best mostly meet disappointment.

Performance management can be modelled convincingly as a system (see above) but the acts or failures to act of fallible human beings prejudice the effectiveness of the system in practice. Duncan Brown (2010) commented that:

**FIGURE 25.3a** Performance management form (part 1)

<b>PERFORMANCE AGREEMENT AND PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN</b>			
Name:		Forename(s):	
Job title:		Department:	
Reviewer's name:		Job title:	
<b>PERFORMANCE AGREEMENT</b>			
Objectives		Performance measures	
Competencies		Agreed actions	
<b>PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN</b>			
Development need	How it is to be met	Action by whom	Target completion date

**FIGURE 25.3b** Performance management form (part 2)

<b>PERFORMANCE REVIEW</b>	
Objectives	Achievements
Competencies	Actions taken
Development needs	Actions taken
Comments by reviewer:	
Signed: _____ Date: _____	
Comments by person reviewed:	
Signed: _____ Date: _____	

The problems [of performance management] are... not of ambition or intent, but rather practice and delivery. Low rates of coverage and even more frequently low quality conversations and non-existent follow-up are commonplace, in the wake of uncommitted directors, incompetent line managers, uncomprehending employees and hectoring HR with their still complex and bureaucratic HR processes.

On the basis of research conducted in 2011 by the Institute for Employment Studies, Brown also observed that: ‘The main areas of concern [about performance management] were the skills and attitudes of reviewing managers, the consistency and quality of approach across large organizations, the complexity of the paperwork and the value of outputs... Performance management, it appears, isn’t working’ (2011: 16).

A survey by WorldatWork and Sibson (2010) established that the top three performance management challenges reported by respondents were: 1) managers lack courage to have difficult performance discussions (63 per cent); 2) performance management is viewed as an ‘HR process’ instead of as a ‘business critical process’ (47 per cent); and 3) that they experienced poor goal setting (36 per cent).

However well-designed a performance management system is, its effectiveness mainly depends on the commitment and skills of line managers. Postuma and Campion (2008: 47) remarked that:

One of the most dreaded tasks managers face is meeting with employees to discuss their job performance. These meetings present a dilemma for managers. On one hand, managers need to give constructive criticism so that employees can improve their performance. On the other hand, managers do not like to give negative feedback because of the bad feelings that often result. It is not surprising, then, that managers avoid giving accurate evaluations, give overly generous evaluations or avoid the process altogether.

They also noted that: ‘Too much attention has been placed on the design of a [performance management] system and not enough on how it works when implemented’ (ibid: 50).

The e-reward 2005 survey of performance management established that the top four issues concerning respondents about their performance management processes were:

- 1 Line managers do not have the skills required – 88 per cent.
- 2 Line managers do not discriminate sufficiently when assessing performance – 84 per cent.
- 3 Line managers are not committed to performance management – 75 per cent.
- 4 Line managers are reluctant to conduct performance management reviews – 74 per cent.

When asked how they coped with these problems, respondents to the e-reward survey emphasized the importance of doing the following:

- Involve line managers in the development and introduction of performance management.
- Train and coach line managers – existing managers and, importantly, potential and newly appointed managers.
- Get top management to stress the importance they attach to performance management – by example as well as exhortation.
- Keep it simple – do not impose a bureaucratic system.
- Emphasize whenever possible that performance management is a normal process of management and that one of the criteria for assessing the performance of managers is how well they do it.
- Do whatever can be done to persuade line managers that formal performance reviews need not be stressful occasions if they are conducted properly, but that they can in fact provide ‘quality time’ for the two parties to engage in a dialogue about performance and development opportunities (eliminating formal ratings helps).

## The impact of performance management on performance

Performance management is expected to improve organizational performance generally by creating a performance culture in which the achievement of

high performance is a way of life. More specifically, effective performance management ensures that individual goals are aligned with organizational goals, so that key performance indicators for employees are linked to those of the organization, and the contribution people can make to organizational performance is therefore defined.

A description of what performance management should contribute was defined by Jones *et al* (1995) as follows:

- communicate a shared vision throughout the organization to help to establish and support appropriate leadership and management styles;
- define individual requirements and expectation of all employees in terms of the inputs and outputs expected from them thus reducing confusion and ambiguity;
- provide a framework and environment for teams to develop and succeed;
- provide the climate and systems which support reward and communicate how people and the organization can achieve improved performance;
- help people manage ambiguity.

It is assumed that managers and their team members working together on a continuing basis throughout the year to use performance management processes such as goal setting, feedback, performance analysis and coaching will create a situation in which continuous improvement in results will be guaranteed. This could be regarded as an unrealistic aspiration – an optimistic belief – but it is the one that underpins the concept of performance management. The holy grail of performance management is to provide evidence that this belief is justified. But it isn't easy – for the reasons given below.

### **Establishing the impact**

Establishing the impact between human resource management (HRM) practices – including performance management – and firm performance is problematic. This is because causality – determining the link between independent and dependent variables (cause and effect) – is a major issue in research, especially in the HRM field. Correlation does not imply causation. It may be relatively easy to establish

correlations in the shape of a demonstration that X is associated with Y; it is much more difficult and sometimes impossible to prove that X causes Y.

### **Evidence from research**

Research projects and other analytical studies that deal with the impact of performance management on overall firm performance, or as aspects of individual performance, are summarized below.

#### **Latham and Locke**

As reported by Latham and Locke (1979) field research in a logging company involving 292 supervisors established that those who set specific production goals achieved the highest productivity. A further study of 892 supervisors produced the same result.

Another study in a logging company involved setting a difficult but attainable target for loading trucks. Loggers were told that they would receive no reward for achieving the target but that no one would be criticized for failing to do so. After the third month performance exceeded 90 per cent of the trucks' capacity compared with 58–63 per cent previously. This level has been sustained for the seven years to date.

An analysis of 10 field studies conducted by various researchers for a range of jobs showed that the percentage change in performance after goal setting ranged from 11 per cent to 27 per cent (median 16 per cent).

#### **McDonald and Smith**

Research was conducted by McDonald and Smith (1991) covering 437 publicly quoted US companies. The findings were that the 205 respondents with performance management as opposed to the others without had:

- higher profits, better cash flows, stronger stock market performance and higher stock value;
- significant gains over three years in financial performance and productivity;
- higher sales growth per employee;
- lower real growth in number of employees.

The researchers commented that: 'In the successful companies the difference in managing employee

performance seems to be that it is regarded as a mainstream business issue, not an isolated “personnel problem”.’

This is a classic case of reversed causality. Performance management systems may have generated successful companies but it is just as likely that the successful companies were the ones with the inclination and money to introduce sophisticated practices such as performance management.

### Institute of Personnel Management

It was reported by the IPM in 1992 that their extensive research found no evidence that improved performance in the private sector is associated with the pursuit of formal performance management programmes. Poor financial performers were as likely to introduce performance management as good performers. There was no readily available and comparable measures of performance in the public sector to test this link, even though performance management is more likely to be adopted in the public sector.

However, one positive theme that was traced throughout the research was the extent to which performance management raised awareness of the pressures on the organization to perform.

### Rodgers and Hunter

A meta-analysis by Rodgers and Hunter (1991) of 70 studies in goal setting, participation in decision-making and objective feedback (as included in typical management-by-objectives programmes) found that 69 of them showed productivity gains and only two showed productivity losses. This led to the conclusion that management by objectives programmes when properly implemented and when supported by top management had an almost universal positive effect on productivity.

### Bernadin, Hagan and Kane

Bernardin *et al* (1995) found improvement in subordinate and peer ratings following 360-degree feedback, but no changes in customer ratings or sales volume.

### Guest and Conway

An analysis by Guest and Conway (1998) covered the 388 organizations with performance management

surveyed by Armstrong and Baron in 1998. The key criteria used for determining the effectiveness of performance management were the achievement of financial targets, development of skills, development of competence, improved customer care and improved quality. Against these criteria, over 90 per cent of respondents rated performance management as being moderately or highly effective. The personnel managers, who in the main responded to the survey, believed that others, and more particularly senior managers, are even more positive in their evaluation. Many also believe that the overall performance of their organization, judged by internal criteria such as quality, productivity and cost, and external criteria such as market share and profitability, are at least as good and are often better than that of their main competitors.

But there were caveats. The analysis indicated that the views of respondents to the survey should all be viewed with extreme caution since they are often based on a very limited form of formal evaluation, or on an absence of any formal evaluation. This raises serious questions about the basis for the generally positive assessment of performance management.

Further, more detailed statistical analysis of the replies to the questionnaire failed to demonstrate consistent evidence of any link between the practice of performance management and outcomes such as the achievement of financial targets, achievement of quality and customer service goals and employee development goals. The conclusion reached was that this survey has produced no convincing evidence that performance management has an impact on overall organizational performance.

### Gallup

As reported by Risher (2005) Gallup has analysed its Q 12 survey and found that employers with a formal performance review process have more engaged employees – 33 per cent versus 21 per cent – and fewer disengaged employees – 12 per cent versus 29 per cent.

### Sibson and WorldatWork

As reported by Kochanski (2007) a survey by Sibson and WorldatWork found that high performing firms have strong leadership support for performance management. An analysis of total return to shareholders over a three-year period (2003–05) revealed

that 64 per cent of the top performing companies had performance management systems that were rated as effective, compared to only 36 per cent of the bottom performing companies. The companies that excelled at performance management: 1) used their systems as the primary way to manage individual performance throughout the company; 2) have strong leadership support; and 3) have more line champions.

## Watson Wyatt

As cited by Pulakos *et al* (2008) a recent Watson Wyatt survey found that only 30 per cent of workers felt that their performance management system helped to improve performance. Less than 40 per cent said that the system established clear performance goals or generated honest feedback.

## Conclusions

The results of these studies are mixed. But it is still possible to believe in the benefits of performance management to organizations on the assumption that people are more likely to respond positively and are more likely to work to improve their performance and develop their capabilities if they share in the processes of defining expectations and reviewing performance and competency against those expectations, and are involved in creating and implementing plans for developing their skills and competences. If this happens generally (admittedly, often a big if), and if the organization provides the managerial and systems support necessary, than the presumption that this will contribute to overall performance improvement is not unreasonable, even if it cannot be proved.

## Performance management as a rewarding process

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Performance management, if carried out properly, can reward people by recognition through feedback, the provision of opportunities to achieve, the scope to develop skills, and guidance on career paths. All these are non-financial rewards that can encourage job and organizational engagement and make a longer-lasting and more powerful impact than financial rewards such as performance-related pay.

Performance management is, of course, also associated with pay by generating the information required to decide on pay increases or bonuses related to performance, competency or contribution. In some organizations this is its main purpose, but performance management is, or should be, much more about developing people and rewarding them in the broadest sense.

## 360-degree feedback

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Also known as multisource feedback, 360-degree is assessed and feedback is given by a number of people who may include their manager, subordinates, colleagues and customers. Assessments take the form of ratings against various performance dimensions. The term '360-degree feedback' is sometimes used loosely to describe upward feedback where this is given by subordinates to their managers. This is the most common approach and is more properly described as 180-degree feedback. Feedback may be presented direct to individuals, or to their managers, or both. Expert counselling and coaching for individuals as a result of the feedback may be provided by a member of the HR department or an outside consultant. The 360-degree feedback or a variant of it was used by 30 per cent of the respondents to the 2005 e-reward survey.

Data from questionnaires forms the basis of 360-degree feedback, which measure from different perspectives the behaviours of individuals against a list of competencies. In effect, they ask for an evaluation: 'How well does... do...?' The competency model may be one developed within the organization or the competency headings may be provided by the supplier of a questionnaire. A typical questionnaire may cover aspects of performance such as leadership, teamwork, communication, organizational skills, decisiveness, drive and adaptability. Questionnaires are normally processed with the help of software developed within the organization or, most commonly, provided by external suppliers.

Feedback is presented to individuals, often anonymously but sometimes by their manager. If the purpose of the system is primarily developmental, as is most frequently the case, the action may be left to individuals as part of their personal development plans, but the planning process may be shared between individuals and their managers if they both



have access to the information. Even if the data only goes to the individual it can be discussed in a performance review meeting so that joint plans can be made, and there is much to be said for adopting this approach.

The disadvantages can all be minimized if not avoided completely by careful design, communication, training and follow-up. But it is still possible to argue, as did Grint (1995: 68–69), that 360-degree feedback ‘merely replaces single-assessor subjectivity with multi-assessor subjectivity’.

## Introducing performance management

The programme for introducing performance management should take into account that one of the main reasons why it fails is that either line managers

are not interested, or they don’t have the skills, or both. It is important to get buy-in from top management so that their leadership can encourage line managers to play their part. Line managers should be involved in planning the scheme and its implementation. They have to be convinced that the time they spend will pay off in terms of improved performance. To encourage buy-in, the process has to be simple (not too much paper). The demanding skills of concluding performance agreements, setting objectives, assessing performance, giving feedback and coaching need to be developed by formal training, supplemented by coaching and the use of mentors.

Excellent practical advice on introducing performance management or making substantial changes to an existing scheme was given by the respondents to the e-Reward 2005 survey. Comments in the form of dos and don’ts are set out in Figure 25.4 in the order of frequency with which they were mentioned.

**FIGURE 25.4** Introducing performance management: dos and don’ts

Do	Don’t
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• consult/involve;</li> <li>• provide training;</li> <li>• communicate (process and benefits);</li> <li>• get buy-in from senior management;</li> <li>• align and ensure relevance to organizational/business/stakeholder needs;</li> <li>• keep it simple;</li> <li>• get ownership from line managers;</li> <li>• ensure clear purpose and processes;</li> <li>• monitor and evaluate;</li> <li>• align to culture;</li> <li>• plan and prepare carefully;</li> <li>• align with other HR processes;</li> <li>• run a pilot scheme;</li> <li>• clarify link to reward;</li> <li>• treat as a business process;</li> <li>• be realistic about the scale and pace of change;</li> <li>• define performance expectations.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• just make it a form-filling, paper-intensive exercise;</li> <li>• make it too complicated;</li> <li>• rush in a new system;</li> <li>• underestimate the time it takes to introduce;</li> <li>• keep changing the system;</li> <li>• assume managers have the skills required;</li> <li>• link to pay;</li> <li>• blindly follow others;</li> <li>• neglect communication, consultation and training;</li> <li>• assume that everyone wants it.</li> </ul>

## Requirements for success

Research by Haines and St-Onge (2012) established that performance management is more likely to be successful when:

- there is more performance management training for managers covering performance coaching and constructive feedback;
- employee recognition is emphasized;
- the corporate culture values engagement;
- performance management is strategically integrated with human resource management and the business plans of the organization;
- human capital is valued;
- there is a positive employee relations climate.

To which could be added two further points. First, the comment made by Lawler and McDermott (2003: 55) that:

Managers at all levels in a hierarchy can play an important role in the operation of the performance management system. If the performance management system is going to be tied into the business strategy, it is critical that senior management take a role and make the tie between business strategy and the performance management system. The behaviour of management is also an indication of how important the performance management system is and as a result is likely to have a strong influence on how the system is actually executed.

Secondly, performance management systems are more likely to be successful when the culture of the organization is performance-oriented.

## CASE STUDIES

### Performance management at CEMEX UK

CEMEX UK is a supplier of cement, ready-mixed concrete and aggregates, with 4,000 employees. It is a subsidiary of the Mexican company CEMEX.

#### Aims

The aims of the Performance and Potential Assessment scheme at CEMEX UK are to:

- promote strategic alignment and respond to business needs;
- facilitate clear communication and understanding of standards;
- ensure objective grading and differentiation of potential levels;
- promote continuous feedback and development;
- reinforce high-performance attitudes.

#### The annual cycle

Cemex's performance management scheme runs over the calendar year as follows:

- 1 The company's overall budget is set in January and from this the most senior managers' objectives are established, which are then cascaded down the organization.
- 2 Around July, there is a mid-year review of initial objectives set and discussions on how the individual is progressing over the first part of the year.
- 3 Finally, between November and January an ultimate meeting takes place where line managers and individuals meet and staff are rated between one and five by their line managers.

## Performance management at DHL

DHL is a global market leader in the international express and logistics industry, with 45,000 staff in Europe.

DHL's annual performance management process begins in August when the bonus framework and core elements of the scheme are designed at the top level. Following this, in mid-November, based on the aims decided upon in August, targets are set for the year by a panel of senior staff. Once devised, these targets are cascaded down the organization into individual personal objectives following discussions between line managers and HR.

The cascading process is designed to ensure that targets are refined and altered to align with each individual's actual job. Further discussions then take place to decide what each target means for employees in practice and their implications for competencies. Around the same time, attainment levels and scoring based on the previous year's performance take place to determine bonus levels and salary rises. Following this, with targets already set, around the middle of January an outline for recording performance targets for personal and financial performance for the coming year is designed, and in mid-February the company's financial results become known. This makes it possible to determine the pot available for bonus payments and salary increases relating to the previous year. Bonuses are paid in either March or April, while salary reviews take place in April.

The initial stage of establishing overall objectives and the target-setting framework sets the tone for the year. From year to year, conditions change, with the priorities of senior management reflecting the current state of affairs. As a result, each year there are a number of overarching themes such as serving customers, for example, or health and safety. These core individual key objectives (IKOs) are strictly adhered to, although local managers can determine themselves how to manage their attainment. In contrast, more flexibility exists for other objectives, with managers at lower levels able to alter them to align with their particular needs. There is further flexibility in the system with regard to its timing.

### Performance management tools

To ensure the smooth running of the system, managers and staff alike are provided with a number of tools to help them during the performance management process. These include:

- A performance evaluation template: this template enables the appropriate competency model to be reviewed and evaluated.
- An objective agreement template: this template is located within the performance evaluation template and is used to capture both performance and personal objectives.
- Competency models: available as support tools for personal development planning.
- Technical competencies: these represent a support framework for identifying core technical competencies for key operational roles.
- Development guides: guidelines for use in the support of developing a personal development plan.
- Personal development plan (PDP): a template for assessing an individual against management competencies and developing actions for them to progress their career.
- Career ladder: a guide to support the development of a personal development plan.
- Passport of success: a small booklet retained by the individual (non-management) that identifies completed training.
- Site succession plan: a plan developed utilizing information from the performance review and PDP process.

### The annual face-to-face meeting

A key element of the performance management cycle is the face-to-face meeting between line managers and each member of their teams. For operational employees (non-management) the company recommends that, as a minimum, this should be a discussion of around 30 minutes, while for managers a one-hour meeting is suggested. During the meeting, the managers and their direct reports examine performance over the last 12 months with reference to the previous year's objectives. Discussions cover what was achieved, whether support provided was sufficient and, if relevant, what could have been done differently for a more effective result.

Following this they agree performance objectives for the coming year, along with any support in the form of training and development that can be offered. Objectives are documented in a 'target agreement form', information on levels of attainment captured on the 'performance evaluation tool', while training and support needs are recorded in the 'performance development plan'. In addition, as mentioned, further support tools used include competency models, development guides, technical competencies and career ladders.

Unlike performance objectives, development objectives are primarily the individual's responsibility to identify, with support provided by managers via the supply of appropriate resources and by contributing objectivity in discussions on staff potential. In some circumstances, DHL guidance says that it may be appropriate to develop a full performance development action plan, while in others this may not be necessary. In either case, though, the tools mentioned above are available to assist. DHL says it is committed to personal development planning because it supports the growth of individuals across the organization, stating that 'growing its people develops talent to meet the organization's future management and leadership requirements'. Further, it is a 'motivator for the individual and allows development priorities to be clearly identified, creating opportunities to fully achieve their potential'.

### Competencies

Closely linked to objectives, competencies play an important part throughout DHL's performance management process. In addition to the management of performance, they are used for recruitment, selection, induction and job sizing and feed into decisions on pay increases. There are different competencies for different roles.

### Progress meetings

In addition to the main performance management meetings, managers are advised to arrange progress meetings throughout the year. The number will depend on the individual in question, but the company suggests that there should be at least one every 12 months. In this meeting, discussions cover how attainment against objectives and competencies is progressing, whether training and development support aligns with expectations and whether additional support can be provided. Moreover, in some cases, certain senior employees are consulted on their own aspirations, and questions are asked such as whether they

want to move upwards or into a different role, or perhaps to change location.

### Performance measurement/scoring

At the end of the year in the subsequent annual meeting the process begins again, while at the same time, ratings for the last 12 months are given based on performance against objectives and the individual's competencies. To aid in the evaluation process, the 'performance evaluation tool' is used, which includes a competency and development needs assessment. Using this, progress against last year's performance evaluation is discussed, particularly drawing on successes during the year. Individual achievement is based on a combination of two ratings. First, there is a measure of achievement against personal objectives – also known as personal targets or individual key objectives (IKOs). This concentrates on what is achieved, as distinct from a second rating that examines *how* things are achieved, drawing on competencies. While there is no particular formula, both ratings are taken into account when making decisions on pay, bonuses and career progression. Under the first measure, target achievement level is linked to IKOs and scores are on a scale of 0 to 133.33 per cent. On-target performance gives a score of 100 per cent. Competency ratings are on a scale of 1 to 5 where 5 is exceptional and 1 unsatisfactory, as follows:

- 1 *Far exceeds*: consistently demonstrating the competency behaviours effectively, role model.
- 2 *Exceeds*: demonstrates the competency behaviours beyond what is expected.
- 3 *Fully meets*: behaviours fully correspond with what is expected in the current role.
- 4 *Partially meets*: demonstrates minor deficiencies (coachable) in behaviour.
- 5 *Does not meet*: does not demonstrate behaviours expected in the current role.

When it comes to decisions on salary increases, ratings are moderated by employees' positions in their pay bands, local budget constraints and the market. Ratings are used to determine bonus levels and they also tie in to decisions on promotion and succession planning.

### Succession planning

Following the evaluation and rating stage, the line manager's immediate superior reviews the results and, in the

light of them, considers, among other things, succession and career planning. By using the overall results, senior managers can determine where there are skills gaps or other deficiencies. In addition, it enables them to take a closer look at individual employees to consider whether they might be more suited to be employed elsewhere in the organization. Similarly, managers can examine strengths and weaknesses, which might flag up a shortage of certain abilities, such as commercial acumen, for example. Such

issues can therefore be addressed and recruitment can be directed appropriately. Moreover, it also helps when employees leave the organization, making it simple to determine the corresponding skills and behaviours that go from the organization with that individual. To aid with this task, managers are also able to draw on an additional rating for certain senior staff, termed 'potential for job'. This gauges potential for the future and helps by feeding into future decisions on promotion and succession planning.

### Key learning points: Performance management

#### Performance management defined

Performance management is a systematic process for improving organizational performance by developing the performance of individuals and teams.

#### The meaning of performance

Performance is defined as behaviour that accomplishes results.

#### Underpinning theories

- goal theory;
- control theory;
- social cognitive theory.

#### Aims of performance management

Performance management is a means of getting better results by providing the means for individuals to perform well within an agreed framework of planned goals, standards and competency requirements.

#### The performance management cycle

The key processes involved during the cycle are concluding performance and development agreements, performance planning, personal development planning, managing performance throughout the year, conducting performance reviews and assessing performance.

#### Performance management issues

As a human process, performance management can promise more than it achieves. However well designed a performance management system is, its effectiveness mainly depends on the commitment and skills of line managers.

#### Impact of performance management

Performance management is expected to improve organizational performance, generally by creating a performance culture in which the achievement of high performance is a way of life.

The results of research studies on the impact of performance management are mixed. But it is still possible to believe in the benefits of performance management to organizations on the assumption that people are more likely to respond positively and are more likely to work to improve their performance and develop their capabilities if they share in the processes of defining expectations and reviewing performance and competency against those expectations, and are involved in creating and implementing plans for developing their skills and competences.

#### Performance management and reward

Performance management, if carried out properly, can reward people by recognition through feedback, the provision of opportunities to achieve, the scope to develop skills, and guidance on career paths.

### 360-degree feedback

360-degree feedback, also known as multisource feedback, is a process in which someone's performance is assessed and feedback is given by a number of people who may include their manager, subordinates, colleagues and customers.

### Introducing performance management

The programme for introducing performance management should take into account that one of the main reasons why it fails is that either line managers are not interested, or they don't have the skills, or both.

The demanding skills of concluding performance agreements, setting objectives, assessing

performance, giving feedback and coaching need to be developed by formal training supplemented by coaching and the use of mentors.

### Requirements for success

- More performance management training;
- emphasis on employee recognition;
- the corporate culture emphasizes the importance of performance and values engagement;
- performance management is strategically integrated with human resource management and the business plans of the organization;
- a positive employee relations climate.

## Questions

- 1 What are the primary elements of performance management?
- 2 What are the key processes in the performance management cycle?
- 3 What are the key issues in performance management?
- 4 What is 360-degree feedback?

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## 26

# Reward management – strategy and systems

## KEY CONCEPTS AND TERMS

Guiding principles	Reward strategy
Reward mix	Strategic reward
Reward philosophy	Total rewards
Reward segmentation	

## LEARNING OUTCOMES

On completing this chapter you should be able to define these key concepts. You should also understand:

- The nature of reward strategy
- Reward philosophies
- Formulating and implementing reward strategy
- The nature of a reward system

## Introduction

Reward strategy defines what an organization wants to do about reward in the next few years and how it intends to do it. It leads to the development of a reward system that consists of the interrelated processes and practices that combine to ensure that reward management is carried out to the benefit of the organization and the people who work there. This is strategic reward, an approach based on the beliefs that reward and business strategy should be

integrated and that it is necessary to be forward looking – to plan ahead and make the plans happen.

Reward strategy should be underpinned by a reward philosophy as described in the first section of this chapter. The chapter continues with a definition of the meaning of reward strategy, a description of its characteristics and how it is designed and implemented. This is followed by a critical evaluation of the concept of reward strategy. The rest of the chapter is devoted to an analysis of the components of a reward system.

## Reward philosophy

The reward philosophy of the organization represents its beliefs about how people should be rewarded. Reward philosophies can be expressed as guiding principles that define the approach an organization takes to dealing with reward. They are the basis for reward policies and provide guidelines for the actions contained in the reward strategy. The reward philosophy can be communicated to employees so that they understand the background to the reward policies and practices that affect them.

Guiding principles are often agreed by top management with advice from company reward specialists or external consultants. But they will be more acceptable if members of the organization are involved in their definition. Guiding principles can then be communicated to everyone to increase understanding of what underpins reward policies and practices.

However, employees will suspend their judgement of the principles until they experience how they are applied. What matters to them is not the philosophy itself but the pay practices emanating from it and the messages about the employment 'deal' that they get as a consequence. It is the reality that is important, not the rhetoric.

Reward guiding principles are concerned with matters such as:

- operating the reward system justly, fairly, equitably and transparently in the interests of all stakeholders;
- developing reward policies and practices that support the achievement of business goals;
- rewarding people according to their contribution;
- recognizing the value of everyone who is making an effective contribution, not just the exceptional performers;
- creating an attractive employee value proposition;
- providing rewards that attract and retain people and enlist their engagement;
- helping to develop a high-performance culture;
- maintaining competitive rates of pay;
- maintaining equitable rates of pay;
- allowing a reasonable degree of flexibility in the operation of reward processes and in the choice of benefits by employees;
- devolving more responsibility for reward decisions to line managers.

The following are some examples of reward philosophies and guiding principles.

### Examples

#### The UK Civil Service

##### 1 Meet business need and be affordable:

- Business, operational and workforce needs are the drivers for a reward strategy.
- Business cases outline benefits, risks and costs and justify investment.
- Reward arguments need to be sustainable.

##### 2 Reflect nature of work:

- Recognize and reflect workforce groups identified by function and skills utilized (eg operational, corporate or policy decisions).
- Organizations employing similar workforce groups in similar markets are encouraged to consider similar reward arrangements.

##### 3 Recognize performance:

- Reward reflects the continuing value and the sustained contribution of an employee and their performance in a given position.
- Value and performance rewarded reflect how jobholders contribute to their organization, impact delivery and meet Professional Government (PSG) requirements.

##### 4 Manage total reward:

- Reward includes all aspects of the 'employee deal'; tangible and intangible elements of what is offered.
- Total reward is tailored and promoted to attract, engage and retain the right talent as well as providing personal choice and flexibility.

- Employers/employees need to develop a full understanding and appreciation of the value of the total reward package.

#### 5 Manage all cash:

- Total cash comprises base pay and variable pay.
- Base pay reflects job challenge and individuals' competence in the job.
- Variable pay reflects performance delivered against agreed objectives.

#### 6 Face the market:

- Reward levels, generally and for specific skills, aligned with agreed market positioning to attract, motivate and retain the right talent.
- Reward competitiveness covers each element of total reward (eg base pay, pensions, leave) and the overall deal.

#### 7 Support equal pay:

- Eliminate direct and indirect reward discrimination and reduce any unjustified gender pay gaps.
- Operate reward systems that are perceived by staff to be reasonable and transparent.
- Reward systems and structures evaluated and kept up to date to ensure that they continue to meet the requirements of legislation.

### Diageo

- 1 Performance: rewards are developed that reflect team and individual achievements.
- 2 Market: rewards reflect the market in which an employee is based, whether that be geographical or functional, and compare favourably with those of competitors.
- 3 Communication: Diageo aims to explain to 'everyone the components and value of their reward package, the criteria that affect it, and how they can influence it'.
- 4 Effectiveness: the company seeks 'best practice' and ensures its benefits programmes 'remain effective for the business and our employees'.

### Tesco

- We will provide an innovative reward package that is valued by our staff and communicated brilliantly to reinforce the benefits of working for Tesco.
- Reward investment will be linked to company performance so that staff share in the success they create and, by going the extra mile, receive above average reward compared to local competitors.
- All parts of the total reward investment will add value to the business and reinforce our core purpose, goals and values.

## Reward strategy

Reward strategy provides the impetus for reward system design and operation in order to achieve three major objectives: performance, competitiveness and fairness. It aims to provide answers to two basic questions: 1) what do we need to do about our reward practices to ensure that they are fit for purpose? and 2) how do we intend to do it? It is a declaration of intent that defines what the organization wants to do in the future to develop and implement reward policies, practices and processes that will further the achievement of its business goals and meet the needs of its stakeholders. The aim is to provide a sense of purpose and direction and a basis for developing

reward policies, practices and processes. The strategy is based on an understanding of the needs of the organization and its employees and how they can best be satisfied.

Trevor (2011: 8) observed that strategic reward is:

... a means of enhancing company performance and securing competitive advantage, through the alignment of pay strategies, systems, practices and processes to the organizational strategy. As a management tool, pay is no longer purely a cost of hiring necessary labour, but a means of aligning a company's unique and inimitable asset – their employees – to the strategic direction of the organization.

## The content of reward strategy

As Armstrong and Murlis (2007: 33) stated: 'Reward strategy will be characterized by diversity and conditioned both by the legacy of the past and the realities of the future.' All reward strategies are different, just as all organizations are different. Of course, similar aspects of reward will be covered in the strategies of different organizations but they will be treated differently in accordance with variations between organizations in their contexts, business strategies and cultures. But the reality of reward strategy is that it is not such a clear-cut process as some believe. It evolves, it changes and it has sometimes to be reactive rather than proactive.

Reward strategy often has to be a balancing act because of potentially conflicting goals. For example, it may be necessary to reconcile the competing claims of being externally competitive and internally equitable – paying a specialist more money to reflect market rate pressures may disrupt internal relativities. Or the belief that a universally applicable reward system is required may conflict with the perceived need to adopt a policy of segmentation (varying the reward package for different jobs, occupations or people to reflect particular knowledge and skills

and the types and levels of contribution they make).

Reward strategy may be a broad-brush affair, simply indicating the general direction in which it is thought that reward management should go. Additionally or alternatively, reward strategy may set out a list of specific intentions dealing with particular aspects of reward management, for example:

- the development of a 'total reward' system;
- the introduction of performance pay;
- replacement of an existing contingent pay scheme;
- the introduction of a new grade and pay structure;
- the replacement of a decayed job evaluation scheme;
- the introduction of a formal recognition scheme;
- the development of a flexible benefits system;
- the conduct of equal pay reviews with the objective of ensuring that work of equal value is paid equally.

### Examples of key themes in reward strategies

*Airbus:* Introduce performance pay for all employees; ensure that its rates are competitive with the external market and deal with anomalies caused by previous rigidities, such as grade drift brought about by people having to be promoted to a higher grade to receive additional pay.

*AstraZeneca:* Promote a culture that values, recognizes and rewards outstanding performance.

*Centrica:* Establish a link between pay and performance and align pay with the market.

*The Children's Society:* Develop flexible and fair reward systems that will support our mission and corporate objectives by recognizing contribution,

accountability, teamworking and innovation, and are market sensitive but not market led.

*Diageo:* Release the potential of every employee to deliver Diageo's performance goals.

*Kent County Council:* Pay people a fair rate for the job and give additional reward for excellent contribution.

*National Union of Teachers:* Develop a new broad graded pay structure and introduce a new job evaluation scheme as a basis for the structure.

*Tesco:* Reward staff for their contribution in a way that enables them to benefit directly from the success they help to create.

## Formulating reward strategy

The research conducted by Trevor (2011) in seven companies established that in all cases senior management decided on the strategy. They:

- agreed guiding principles;
- provided broad guidelines in the form of expected outcomes;
- reviewed options for action;
- settled the course of action.

This was the basis for the design stage, which was determined largely by benchmarking best practice and internal concerns over relativity, equity (fairness), governance and performance.

A well-designed reward strategy should be based on the answers to the following questions:

- How will it add value?
- How is it going to be put into effect?
- What supporting processes will be needed and can they be made available?
- Who is going to be involved in implementation?
- How are we going to make sure that those involved know what they have to do, know why they are expected to do it, believe that it is worthwhile and have the skills to do it?
- Are people likely to react negatively to the proposed strategy and, if so, how do we deal with their concerns?
- How much time will be needed; how much time have we got?
- Will any additional resources be required and can they be made available?
- Are there any likely implementation problems and how will they be dealt with?

Particular attention should be paid to issues arising from process factors (how the strategy will work) involving people and communicating with them, and the part played by line managers.

## Implementing reward strategy

The aim of implementation is to make the reward strategy an operational reality by building the capacity of the organization to put into practice the proposals

worked out in the development stage. As Armstrong and Brown (2006: 159) stressed: 'It is always essential to design with implementation in mind.'

But implementation problems can arise for the following reasons:

- *Over-engineering* – reward specialists (both practitioners and consultants) are often tempted to design highly complicated processes that are hard to explain and justify and even harder to operate.
- *Misalignment* – the integration of business and HR strategies is not achieved when formulating the strategy.
- *Precipitant implementation* – new policies and practices are not tested properly to identify potential implementation problems arising from poor design; the absence of adequate supporting processes such as performance management.

There are two ways of dealing with these problems. First, wherever possible, the new or significantly altered reward process should be pilot tested in a division or department or with a selected sample of employees. The second approach, which can be used where there is more than one component of the reward strategy, is to phase the introduction of the different parts. An incremental approach means that people are given the time to absorb and adjust to the new practice, and the resources such as HR support required to deliver the strategy are not overstretched.

## Critical evaluation of the concept of reward strategy

The problem with a strategic approach to reward is that it can promise more than it achieves. This contradicts the main message delivered by US writers such as Lawler (1990) in his *Strategic Pay* and Schuster and Zingheim (1992) in their *The New Pay*, which was that it provides a powerful lever for improving business performance. As Thompson (1998: 70) commented:

The most that companies can hope to do in their approach to reward is to make sure that it does not distort the relationship [between management and employees]. Managing reward is thus a job of damage limitation and perhaps not the 'strategic

lever for organizational transformation' that appears so seductive in the writing of American commentators.

Trevor (2011) posed the question: to what extent can pay be strategic? He claimed that rationalism is limited and pointed out that pay systems tend to be selected for their legitimacy (best practice as advocated by institutions such as the CIPD and by management consultants) rather than for purely economic reasons. He observed (ibid: 35) that: 'What is desired (approach), and what is intended (design), may not be reflected in what is achieved (operation).' His research into the pay policies and practice of seven large consumer goods companies led to the following conclusions:

As a result of the gap between intended policy and achieved practice, between the espoused and the realized, pay within a number of the case companies does not fulfil the strategic objectives of motivating managerial, professional and technical employees to work harder. It does not engender commitment or loyalty as outcomes, nor does it equip management with the behavioural 'lever' promised by standard theory. Despite the best efforts of leading companies, and the rhetoric of their espoused pay practice, pay practice is operationally non-strategic. (ibid: 201)

However, it cannot be denied that to have a sense of purpose and direction is a good thing and, with all its limitations, this justifies a strategic approach to reward.

## CASE STUDIES: REWARD STRATEGY

### Integrated approach to reward at AEGON UK

Like many companies, AEGON UK (a large insurance company) had pay systems and supporting processes such as job evaluation and performance appraisal that used to stand alone, apart from other HR processes. The company adopted a more holistic approach to the development of its new reward system – which it calls the Human Resources Integrated Approach – so that from whatever angle staff now look at the elements of pay management, performance, career development and reward, they are consistent and linked.

The stated objective of this programme is 'to develop a set of HR processes which are integrated with each other and with the business objectives'. In other words, AEGON UK aims to ensure that the processes of recruiting, retaining and motivating people, as well as measuring their performance, are in line with what the business is trying to achieve.

The Human Resources Integrated Approach is underpinned by a competency framework. The established competencies form the basis of the revised HR processes:

- *Recruitment*: competency based with multi-assessment processes as the basic approach.
- *Reward*: market driven with overall performance dictating rate of progress of salaries within broad bands rather than existing grades.
- *Performance management*: not linked to pay, concentrated on personal development, objective setting and competency development.
- *Training and development*: targeted on key competencies and emphasizing self-development.

### Reward strategy at BT

Reward strategy at BT (British Telecom) is a fairly broad-brush affair simply indicating the general direction in which it is thought that reward management for the 90,000 staff at BT should go, with an emphasis on adopting a more holistic, total reward approach. It is summarized as follows:

Use the full range of rewards (salary, bonus, benefits and recognition) to recruit and retain the best people,

and to encourage and reward achievement where actions and behaviours are consistent with the BT values.

### Guiding principles

BT's reward strategy is underpinned by a set of guiding principles defining the approach that the organization takes

to dealing with reward. These guiding principles are the basis for reward policies and provide guidelines for the actions contained in the reward strategy. They express the reward philosophy of the organization – its values and beliefs about how people should be rewarded. The six guiding principles governing the design of the reward system at BT are as follows:

- 1 business linkage;
- 2 clarity and transparency;
- 3 market competitiveness;
- 4 performance differentiation;
- 5 choice and flexibility;
- 6 equal pay.

Broadly speaking, the three principal elements driving individual reward are:

- 1 The individual's performance and contribution in the role – what does it mean to have high individual performance?
- 2 The competitiveness of the individual's existing salary, together with the actual (and anticipated) salary movement in relevant local markets – how does salary align to the external market?
- 3 The company's business results and ability to pay – can the company afford to invest money in terms of additional reward?

Underpinning these pillars are the principles of clarity (a 'focus on roles'), equal pay and choice.

### DSG International: aligning reward with the business plan

In a difficult economic environment DSG simplified its complex mix of reward arrangements to establish a close alignment between rewards and the five components of a new business turnaround plan, primarily through the redesign of executive incentive plans. The change was designed to

enhance the perception of line-of-sight between individual performance, group performance and reward. It illustrates the vital role of communications to explain the 'why' of reward change, what it means for the business and how each component of reward links to a business plan.

### Total reward strategy at GlaxoSmithKline (GSK)

TotalReward, the name by which GSK refers to its approach to reward, consists of three elements:

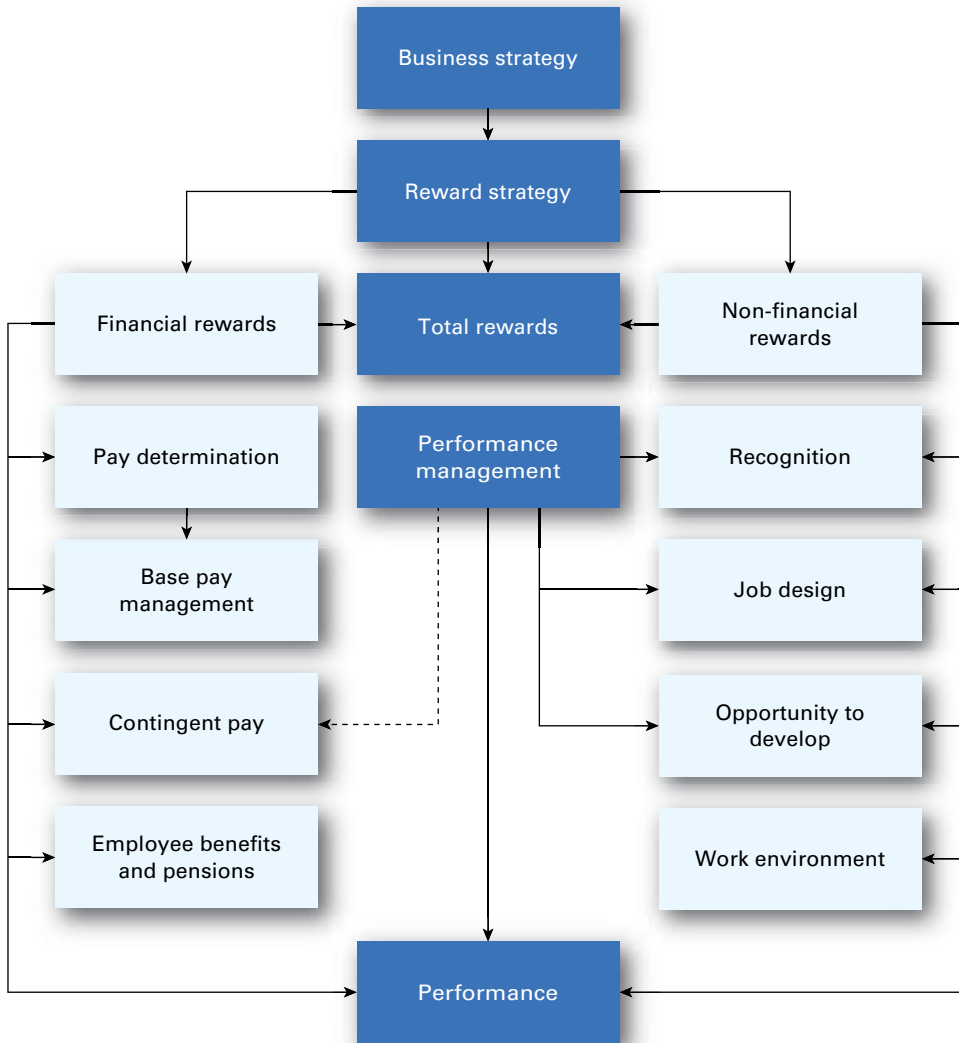
- total cash (base salary and bonus), plus long-term incentives for managers and executives;
- lifestyle benefits (health care, employee assistance, family support, dental care);
- savings choices (pension plan, ShareSave, ShareReward).

The complete package – the concept of which is based on employees understanding the total value of all the rewards they receive, not just the individual elements – is designed to attract, retain, motivate and develop the best talent. The proposition for employees is that TotalReward gives them the opportunity to share in the company's success, makes it easier to balance home and working life, and helps them to take care of themselves and their families.

## The reward system

Strategic reward leads to the design of a reward system. As illustrated in Figure 26.1, this consists of the interrelated processes and practices that combine to ensure that reward management is carried out

effectively to the benefit of the organization and the people who work there. The system is driven by the business strategy, which in turn drives the reward strategy. As described below, its major components are financial and non-financial rewards, which are combined to form a total reward system. Performance management plays an important part

**FIGURE 26.1** A reward system

in supporting non-financial rewards and may be used to inform performance or contribution pay decisions. All these components combine to influence levels of performance.

### **Financial rewards**

Financial rewards consist of job-based pay, which provides pay related to the value of the job, and person-based pay, which provides rewards that

recognize the individual's contribution. They also include employee benefits and pensions and financial recognition schemes. The management of job and person-based pay involves:

- Pay determination – making decisions on the value of jobs by means of market pricing and job evaluation.
- Base pay management – developing and operating pay structures that group jobs into grades, bands or levels in accordance with



internal and external relativities and usually provide for pay progression.

- Contingent pay – planning and managing schemes that provide for pay progression related to performance, contribution, competence, skill or length of service.

Labour economists distinguish between the incentive effect of financial rewards (generating more engagement and effort) and the sorting effect (attracting better quality employees). The fundamental issue is the extent to which financial rewards provide an incentive effect. The sorting effect is important but creates less controversy, perhaps because it is more difficult to pin down.

The case for and against financial rewards as incentives, and a description of the contingent pay schemes that provide such awards, are set out in the next chapter.

### Non-financial rewards

Non-financial rewards focus on the needs people have to varying degrees for recognition, achievement, personal growth and acceptable working conditions. They include the non-financial recognition of achievements, the design of fulfilling jobs, giving people the scope to develop their skills and careers and offering a work environment that provides a high quality of working life and an appropriate relationship between work and private life (work–life balance).

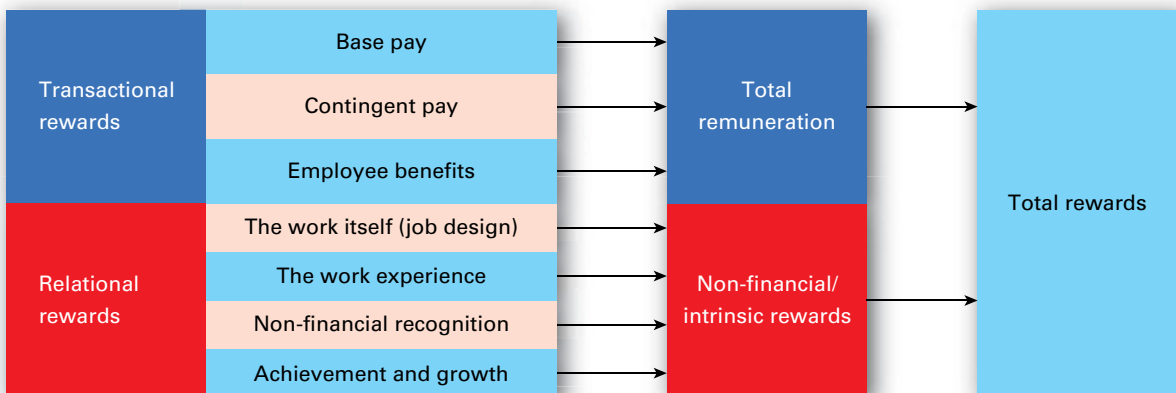
Non-financial rewards can be extrinsic, such as praise or recognition, or intrinsic, associated with job challenge and interest and feelings that the work is worthwhile.

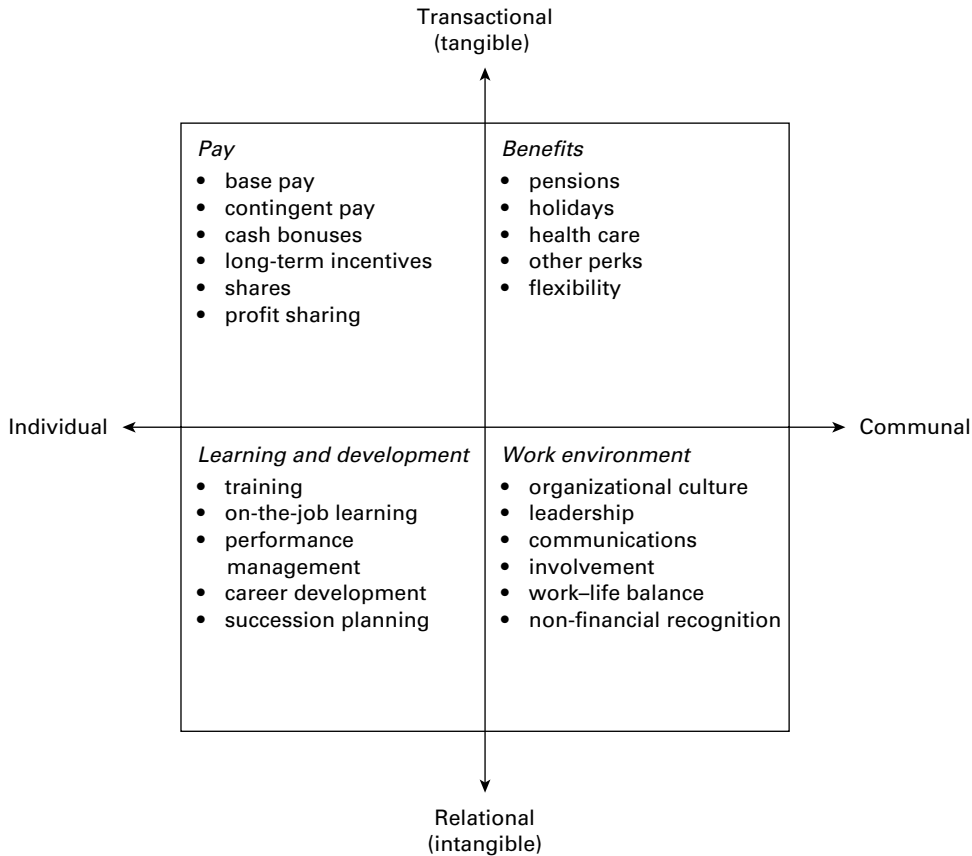
### Total rewards

Total rewards are the combination of financial and non-financial rewards made available to employees. The various aspects of reward, namely base pay, contingent pay, employee benefits and non-financial rewards, which include intrinsic rewards from the work itself, are linked together and treated as an integrated and coherent whole.

The concept of total rewards describes an approach to reward management that emphasizes the need to consider all aspects of the work experience of value to employees, not just a few such as pay and employee benefits. It aims to blend the financial and non-financial elements of reward into a cohesive whole. A total rewards approach, as shown in Figure 26.2, recognizes that it is necessary to get financial rewards (pay and benefits) right. But it also appreciates the importance of providing people with rewarding experiences that arise from their work environment (the job they do and how they are managed) and the opportunity to develop their skills and careers. It contributes to the production of an employee value proposition that provides a clear, compelling reason why talented people should work for a company.

**FIGURE 26.2** The elements of total rewards



**FIGURE 26.3** Model of total rewards: Towers Perrin

The Towers Perrin model shown in Figure 26.3 is frequently used as the basis for planning a total rewards approach. It consists of a matrix with four quadrants. The upper two quadrants – pay and benefits – represent transactional or tangible rewards. These are financial in nature and are essential to recruit and retain staff but can be easily copied by competitors. By contrast, the relational or intangible non-financial rewards represented in the lower two quadrants cannot be imitated so readily and therefore create both human capital and human process advantage. They are essential to enhancing the value of the upper two quadrants. The real power comes when organizations combine relational and

transactional rewards. The model also makes a useful distinction between individual and communal rewards, particularly, in the latter case, those provided by the work environment.

### **Performance management**

The role of performance management in a reward system is to contribute to improving performance by providing a means of recognition, influencing job design when reviewing role responsibilities, setting up personal development plans and, when appropriate, informing contingent pay decisions.

## Key learning points: Reward management – strategy and systems

### Reward strategy

Reward strategy defines what an organization wants to do about reward in the next few years and how it intends to do it. It may be a broad-brush affair, simply indicating the general direction in which it is thought reward management should go. Additionally or alternatively, reward strategy may set out a list of specific intentions dealing with particular aspects of reward management.

### Formulating reward strategy

The thrust of reward strategy is to provide the impetus for reward design and operation in order to achieve three major objectives: performance, competitiveness and fairness.

### Implementing reward strategy

The aim of implementation is to make the reward strategy an operating reality by building the capacity of the organization to put into practice the proposals worked out in the development stage.

### Reward philosophy

Reward strategy should be underpinned by a reward philosophy that represents the views of the organization on how people should be valued. This can be articulated as a set of principles that guide the development of reward strategy and the design and operation of the reward system.

### Reward system

A reward system consists of the interrelated processes and practices of financial and non-financial rewards that combine into a total rewards approach to ensure that reward management is carried out to the benefit of the organization and the people who work there.

Financial rewards consist of job-based pay, which provides pay related to the value of the job, and person-based pay, which provides rewards that recognize the individual's contribution. They also include employee benefits and pensions and financial recognition schemes. Non-financial rewards focus on the needs people have to varying degrees for recognition, achievement, personal growth and acceptable working conditions.

Total rewards are the combination of the financial and non-financial rewards made available to employees.

## Questions

- 1 What is strategic reward?
- 2 What is the main characteristic of strategic reward?
- 3 What are the limitations to the concept of strategic reward?
- 4 What is reward strategy?
- 5 What are the main objectives of reward strategy?
- 6 What are the main arguments in favour of having a reward strategy?
- 7 What are the principal areas covered by a reward strategy?
- 8 What is reward philosophy?
- 9 What is the typical approach to formulating reward strategy?
- 10 What are the main problems organizations meet in implementing reward strategy and how can they be overcome?

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## 27

# The practice of reward management

## KEY CONCEPTS AND TERMS

Analytical job matching	Grade	Pay progression
Anchor point	Grade drift	Pay range
Base pay	Incentive effect	Pay spine
Base pay management	Job evaluation	Pay stance
Broad-banded pay structure	Job family pay structure	Payment-by-results
Broad-graded pay structure	Job matching	Performance-related pay
Career family pay structure	Job size	Person-based pay
Compa-ratio	Job worth	Point-factor job evaluation
Competency-related pay	Job-based pay	Reference point
Contingent pay	Line of sight	Remuneration
Contribution-related pay	Lower quartile	Reward management
Distributive justice	Market pricing	Reward system
Evidence-based management	Market rate	Skill-based pay
Evidence-based reward management	Median	Sorting effect
Extreme market pricing	Merit pay	Spot rate
Factor plan	Mid-point management	Target rate
Financial rewards	Narrow-graded pay structure	Time-based pay
	Non-financial rewards	Upper quartile

## LEARNING OUTCOMES

On completing this chapter you should be able to define these key concepts. You should also understand:

- The meaning and aims of reward management
- Pay determination
- Job evaluation
- Market pricing
- Base pay management
- Contingent pay
- Recognition schemes
- Employee benefits
- The evaluation of reward systems
- The administration of reward

## Introduction

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The aim of this chapter is to describe how reward management works in practice. It starts with definitions of what reward management is and what it aims to do. The following components of the reward system are then dealt with – pay determination through market pricing and job evaluation, base pay management, contingent pay, recognition, and the provision of employee benefits and pensions. This chapter continues with two sections dealing respectively with the evaluation and management of reward.

## Reward management defined

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Reward management is concerned with the strategies, policies and practices required to ensure that the value of people and the contribution they make to achieving organizational, departmental and team goals is recognized and rewarded. It is about the design, implementation and maintenance of reward systems that aim to satisfy the needs of both the organization and its stakeholders and to operate fairly, equitably and consistently.

Reward management deals with non-financial rewards such as recognition, learning and development opportunities and increased job responsibility, as well as financial rewards.

## Aims of reward management

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As Ghoshal and Bartlett (1995) pointed out, reward management is there to add value to people. It is not just about attaching value to them. Its aims are to:

- *Reward people* according to the value they create by providing for them to be recognized and paid in accordance with the degree to which they meet or exceed expectations.
- *Support the achievement of business goals* by helping to ensure that the organization has the talented and engaged people it needs.

- *Promote high performance* by ensuring that the reward system recognizes and encourages it.
- *Support and develop the organization's culture* by linking rewards to behaviour that is in line with core values.
- *Define the right behaviours and outcomes* by defining expectations through performance management and merit pay schemes.

## Pay determination

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Pay determination is the process of deciding on the level of pay for jobs or people. Its two aims, which often conflict, are: 1) to be externally competitive to attract, engage and retain the people required by the organization; and 2) to be internally equitable in the sense that rates of pay correctly reflect the relativities between jobs. These aims are achieved respectively by market pricing and job evaluation.

### *Competitive pay*

Pay is by no means the only factor that influences people to join or remain with an organization, but it is important. The most significant influence on pay levels is the law of supply and demand. If the demand for labour exceeds supply, pay levels will be higher and vice versa. Organizations pay more to attract and retain high-quality employees in critical positions.

The need to be competitive means that organizations have to take account of market rates when deciding on the level of pay for a job. They bear in mind the saying: 'A job is worth what the market says it's worth.' Consequently, establishing market rates through what is termed 'market pricing', as described in the next section of this chapter, is a vital step in deciding on levels of pay.

### *Internally equitable pay*

Internally equitable pay is fair pay. This means providing equal pay for work of equal value as required by the Equality Act (2010) and supporting case law, and ensuring that the rates of pay for jobs at different levels properly reflect relative values. Internal

relativities are established by job evaluation. But there is a tension between external competitiveness and internal equity. Some adopt the slogan, ‘the market rules ok’ – internal equity considerations are secondary. But if this policy is pursued too vigorously there is a risk of alienating existing employees and contravening the provisions of equal pay legislation. This risk should be assessed.

## Market pricing

Market pricing is the process of making decisions on pay structures and individual rates of pay and obtaining information on market rates (market rate analysis). A policy decision is required on the relationship between market rate levels and levels of pay within the organization. This is called the ‘pay stance’, which may be expressed in such terms as matching median (average) rates or paying upper quartile rates (loosely, within the top 25 per cent).

### Use of market pricing

Market pricing informs decisions on base rates of pay, ie, the amount of pay that constitutes the basic rate for the job or the person. The aim is to ensure that the rates are competitive. It helps to develop the pay structure – the pay ranges attached to grades. Information on market rates may lead to the introduction of market supplements for individual jobs or the creation of separate pay structures (market groups) to cater for particular market rate pressures. It is referred to as ‘extreme market pricing’ when market rates are the sole means of deciding on internal rates of pay and relativities, and conventional job evaluation is not used. An organization that adopts this method is said to be ‘market-driven’. Market pricing may be associated with formal job evaluation, which establishes internal relativities and the grade structure.

### Acceptability of market pricing

The acceptability of either form of market pricing is dependent on the availability of robust market data and, when looking at external rates, the quality of the job-to-job matching process, ie comparing like with like. It can therefore vary from analysis of data

by job titles to detailed matched analysis collected through bespoke surveys focused on real market equivalence. Extreme market pricing can provide guidance on internal relativities. But it can lead to pay discrimination against women, where the market has traditionally been discriminatory, and it does not satisfy UK equal pay legislation.

### The concept of a market rate

Market pricing attempts to establish the market rate for jobs, but the notion of a market rate is a more elusive concept than it seems. There is no such thing as a definitive market rate for any job, even when comparing identically sized organizations in the same industry and location. Different market information sources for the same types of jobs produce different results because of variations in the sample, the difficulty of obtaining precise matches between jobs in the organization and jobs elsewhere (job matching), and timing (the dates on which the data is collected may differ).

This means that market rate analysis is most unlikely to produce definite information on the rate for the job. The possibly incomplete data from a number of sources, some more reliable than others, has to be interpreted to indicate what the organization should do about it. This may be expressed as a ‘derived market rate’, which is a sort of average of a range of pay information – a dubious notion. Data may be available for some jobs but not for others that are unique to the organization.

### Market rate analysis

Market rate analysis involves the following steps:

- Identify and define the jobs for which market rate data is required. These are benchmark jobs that are representative of different levels and occupations and can be compared with similar jobs. In conducting the survey the aim will be to ‘match’ these jobs as closely as possible with jobs elsewhere.
- Identify the sources of information. These can include published surveys conducted by a pay consultancy or research organization, surveys conducted specially by the organization, ‘pay clubs’ (groups of

employers who exchange pay information) and advertisements. Published surveys are likely to provide the most convenient source of robust information. Special surveys and pay clubs can produce useful data but they are time-consuming. More than one source should be used if possible. Advertisements are useless.

- Collect, analyse and interpret the information. The pay data for jobs may be presented in the form of a range of pay from lowest to highest, the median rate (the midpoint in a distribution of rates of pay) and the upper and lower quartiles (the values which, respectively, are exceeded by a quarter of the values in the distribution or below which a quarter of the values in a distribution occur). Interpreting the data may mean producing a derived market rate from the different sources.
- Apply the information in line with a policy decision on market stance – the pay levels required to be competitive and affordable.

## Job evaluation

Job evaluation is a systematic and formal process for defining the relative worth or size of jobs within an organization in order to establish internal relativities. It is carried out through either an analytical or a non-analytical scheme.

### Analytical job evaluation schemes

Analytical job evaluation is based on a process of breaking down whole jobs into a number of defined elements or factors and then comparing them factor by factor, either with a graduated scale of points attached to a set of factors, or with grade or role profiles analysed under the same factor headings.

The advantages of an analytical approach are that: first, evaluators have to consider each of the characteristics of the job separately before forming a conclusion about its relative value; second, evaluators are provided with defined yardsticks or guidelines that help to increase the objectivity and consistency of judgements. It can also provide a defence in the UK against an equal pay claim.

A toolkit for designing an analytical job evaluation scheme is provided in Chapter 71. The main analytical schemes, as described below, are point-factor rating and analytical matching.

### Point-factor rating

Point-factor schemes are the most common forms of analytical job evaluation. They were used by 70 per cent of the respondents with job evaluation schemes in the e-reward 2003 job evaluation survey.

The basic methodology is to break down jobs into factors. These are the elements in a job such as the level of responsibility, knowledge and skill or decision-making that represent the demands made by the job on job holders. For job evaluation purposes it is assumed that each of the factors will contribute to the value of the job and is an aspect of all the jobs to be evaluated, but to different degrees.

Each factor is divided into a hierarchy of levels, typically five or six. Definitions of these levels are produced to provide guidance on deciding the degree to which the factor applies in the job to be evaluated. A maximum points score is allocated to each factor. The scores available may vary between different factors in accordance with beliefs about their relative significance. This is termed ‘explicit weighting’. If the number of levels varies between factors, this means that they are implicitly weighted because the range of scores available will be greater in the factors with more levels.

The total score for a factor is divided between the levels to produce the numerical factor scale. The complete scheme consists of the factor and level definitions and the scoring system (the total score available for each factor and distributed to the factor levels). This comprises the ‘factor plan’.

Jobs are ‘scored’ (ie allocated points) under each factor heading on the basis of the level of the factor in the job. This is done by comparing the features of the job with regard to that factor with the factor level definitions in order to find out which definition provides the best fit. The separate factor scores are then added together to give a total score, which indicates the relative value of each job and can be used to place the jobs in rank order, or allocate them into grades in a graded pay structure that have been defined in terms of job evaluation points.



## Analytical job matching

Like point-factor job evaluation, analytical job matching is based on the analysis of a number of defined factors. Profiles of roles to be evaluated that have been analysed and described in terms of job evaluation factors are compared with grade, band or level profiles that have been analysed and described in terms of the same job evaluation factors. The role profiles are then ‘matched’ with the range of grade or level profiles to establish the best fit and thus grade the job.

Analytical matching can be used to grade jobs or place them in levels following the initial evaluation of a sufficiently large sample of benchmark jobs, ie representative jobs that provide a valid basis for comparisons. This can happen in big organizations when it is believed that it is not necessary to go through the whole process of point-factor evaluation for every job, especially where ‘generic’ roles are concerned. It takes much less time than using a point-factor scheme and the results can be just as accurate.

## Non-analytical job evaluation

Non-analytical job evaluation schemes enable whole jobs to be compared in order to place them in a grade or a rank order – they are not analysed by reference to their elements or factors. They can operate on a job-to-job basis in which a job is compared with another job to decide whether it should be valued more, less, or the same (ranking and ‘internal benchmarking’ processes). Alternatively, they may function on a job-to-grade basis in which judgements are made by comparing a whole job with a defined hierarchy of job grades (job classification) – this involves matching a job description to a grade description. Non-analytical schemes are simple to introduce and operate but provide no defined standards of judgement. Differences between jobs are not measured and they do not provide a defence in an equal pay case.

## Base pay management

Base pay is the amount of pay that constitutes the rate for the job or the person. Base pay management

uses the information from market pricing and job evaluation to design and operate grade and pay structures.

## Grade and pay structures

Grade and pay structures provide the framework for base pay management as a means of implementing an organization’s pay policies. They enable the organization to determine where jobs should be placed in a hierarchy, define pay levels and the scope for pay progression, and provide the basis upon which relativities can be managed, equal pay achieved and the processes of monitoring and controlling the implementation of pay practices can take place. Grade and pay structures also enable organizations to communicate the career and pay opportunities available to employees.

### Grade structures

A grade structure consists of a sequence or hierarchy of grades, bands or levels into which groups of jobs that are broadly comparable in size are placed. Narrow-graded structures tend to have 10 or more grades, broad-graded structures have six to eight grades, and broad-banded structures have fewer than six ‘bands’. There may be a single structure defined by the number of grades or bands it contains; alternatively the structure may be divided into a number of career or job families, consisting of groups of jobs where the essential nature and purpose of the work are similar but it is carried out at different levels.

### Pay structures

A pay structure consists of pay ranges, brackets or scales that are attached to each grade, band or level in a grade structure. Pay structures are defined by the number of grades they contain and, especially in narrow- or broad-graded structures, the span or width of the pay ranges attached to each grade. ‘Span’ is the scope that the grade provides for pay progression and is usually measured as the difference between the lowest and the highest point in the range as a percentage of the lowest point. Thus a range of £20,000 to £30,000 would have a span of 50 per cent.

Pay can progress within the grades in a narrow- or broad-graded structure on the basis of merit or time served in the grade. Broad-banded structures in theory allow more flexibility, but they often contain pay zones that provide an indication of the extent to which the pay of individuals in a particular role, or cluster of roles, can vary around what is known as an ‘anchor point’ – the rate for a fully competent person in a role that is aligned to market rates. Another form of pay structure is a pay spine (found mainly in the public and voluntary sectors) consisting of a number of pay points that mark progression on the basis of time served.

Some organizations, especially smaller ones, do not have a formal graded structure and rely entirely on ‘spot rates’, ie the rates for jobs do not define any scope for the progression of base pay in the form of a pay range or salary bracket, although bonuses may be provided on top of the base rate. A less common method is to have ‘individual job grades’ which are, in effect, spot rates to which a defined pay range of, say, 20 per cent on either side of the rate has been attached to provide scope for pay progression.

## Guiding principles for grade and pay structures

Grade and pay structures should:

- be appropriate to the culture, characteristics and needs of the organization and its employees;
- facilitate the management of relativities and the achievement of equity, fairness, consistency and transparency in managing gradings and pay;
- enable jobs to be graded appropriately and not be subject to grade drift (unjustified upgradings);
- be flexible enough to adapt to pressures arising from market rate changes and skill shortages;
- facilitate operational flexibility and continuous development;
- provide scope as required for pay progression;
- clarify reward, lateral development and career opportunities;

- be constructed logically and clearly so that the basis upon which they operate can readily be communicated to employees;
- enable the organization to exercise control over the implementation of pay policies and budgets.

## Types of grade and pay structures

The main types of grade and pay structures and their advantages and disadvantages are summarized in Table 27.1.

## Criteria for choice

There is always a choice of structures; the criteria are given in Table 27.2.

## Pay progression

Pay progression takes place when base pay advances through pay ranges or brackets in a grade and pay structure, or through promotions or upgradings. The alternative is a spot rate system, which allows for no progression and is entirely job-based. Progression through pay brackets in a person-based approach may be determined formally by means of an individual contingent pay scheme (merit or service-related). Informal progression takes place when there is no contingent pay scheme and increases are not based on a systematic process.

A decision has to be made on whether an individual contingent pay scheme should be used. The alternatives are to use spot rates or some form of bonus scheme based on team or organizational performance (the latter can be offered in addition to individual or team pay).

## Contingent pay

Contingent pay provides financial rewards that are related to a factor such as performance or service. It can take the form of consolidated increases to base pay and so provide for pay progression. It can also take the form of cash non-consolidated bonuses. Where consolidated increases for individuals are related to performance, competence, contribution or skill it is known as merit pay. If these are solely related to performance it is known as performance-

**TABLE 27.1** Summary description of different grade and pay structures

Type of structure	Features	Advantages	Disadvantages
Narrow-graded	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A sequence of job grades – 10 or more</li> <li>• Narrow pay ranges, eg 20–40%</li> <li>• Progression usually linked to performance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clearly indicate pay relativities</li> <li>• Facilitate control</li> <li>• Easy to understand</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create hierarchical rigidity</li> <li>• Prone to grade drift</li> <li>• Inappropriate in a delayed organization</li> </ul>
Broad-graded	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A sequence of between six and nine grades</li> <li>• Fairly broad pay ranges, eg 40–50%</li> <li>• Progression linked to contribution and may be controlled by thresholds or zones</li> </ul>	<p>As for narrow-graded structures but in addition:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the broader grades can be defined more clearly</li> <li>• better control can be exercised over grade drift</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Too much scope for pay progression</li> <li>• Control mechanisms can be provided but they can be difficult to manage</li> <li>• May be costly</li> </ul>
Broad-banded	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A series of, often, five or six 'broad' bands</li> <li>• Wide pay bands – typically between 50% and 80%</li> <li>• Progression linked to contribution and competence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More flexible</li> <li>• Reward lateral development and growth in competence</li> <li>• Fit new-style organizations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create unrealistic expectations of scope for pay rises</li> <li>• Seem to restrict scope for promotion</li> <li>• Difficult to understand</li> <li>• Equal pay problems</li> </ul>
Career family	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Career families identified and defined</li> <li>• Career paths defined for each family in terms of key activities and competence requirements</li> <li>• Same grade and pay structure for each family</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clarify career paths within and between families</li> <li>• Facilitate the achievement of equity between families and therefore equal pay</li> <li>• Facilitate level definitions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Could be difficult to manage</li> <li>• May appear to be divisive if 'silos' emerge</li> </ul>
Job family	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Separate grade and pay structures for job families containing similar jobs</li> <li>• Progression linked to competence and/or contribution</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitate pay differentiation between market groups</li> <li>• Define career paths against clear criteria</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can appear to be divisive</li> <li>• May inhibit lateral career development</li> <li>• May be difficult to maintain internal equity between job families unless underpinned by job evaluation</li> </ul>
Pay spine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A series of incremental pay points covering all jobs</li> <li>• Grades may be superimposed</li> <li>• Progression linked to service</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Easy to manage</li> <li>• Pay progression not based on managerial judgement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No scope for differentiating rewards according to performance</li> <li>• May be costly as staff drift up the spine</li> </ul>

**TABLE 27.2** Grade and pay structures: criteria for choice

Type of structure	Criteria for choice: the structure may be considered more appropriate when:
Narrow-graded	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the organization is large and bureaucratic with well-defined and extended hierarchies;</li> <li>• pay progression is expected to occur in small but relatively frequent steps;</li> <li>• the culture is one in which much significance is attached to status as indicated by gradings;</li> <li>• when some but not too much scope for pay progression is wanted.</li> </ul>
Broad-graded	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• it is believed that if there is a relatively limited number of grades it will be possible to define and therefore differentiate them more accurately as an aid to better precision when grading jobs;</li> <li>• an existing narrow-graded structure is the main cause of grade drift;</li> <li>• it is considered that pay progression through grades can be related to contribution and that it is possible to introduce effective control mechanisms.</li> </ul>
Broad-banded	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• greater flexibility in pay determination and management is required;</li> <li>• it is believed that job evaluation should no longer drive grading decisions;</li> <li>• the focus is on rewarding people for lateral development;</li> <li>• the organization has been delayed.</li> </ul>
Career family	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• there are distinct families, and different career paths within and between families can be identified and defined;</li> <li>• there is a strong emphasis on career development in the organization;</li> <li>• robust methods of defining competencies exist.</li> </ul>
Job family	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• there are distinct market groups that need to be rewarded differently;</li> <li>• the range of responsibility and the basis upon which levels exist vary between families;</li> <li>• it is believed that career paths need to be defined in terms of competence requirements.</li> </ul>
Pay spine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• this is the traditional approach in public or voluntary sector organizations and it fits the culture;</li> <li>• it is believed to be impossible to measure different levels of contribution fairly and consistently;</li> <li>• ease of administration is an important consideration.</li> </ul>

related pay (the most common form). When payments are related to service it is known as service-related pay. Bonuses can be based on individual, team or organizational performance. Wage earners may receive unconsolidated cash payments in addition to their base pay through an incentive scheme. The CIPD 2013 reward survey found that the most common split between total spend on fixed pay and contingent pay were 90 per cent fixed to 10 per cent variable; 71 per cent of the respondents related pay to individual performance.

## Merit pay

Decisions on the use of merit or performance-related pay should be based on a critical evaluation of the arguments for and against it and an understanding of the criteria for success.

### Arguments for merit pay

The most powerful argument in favour of merit pay is that those who contribute more should be paid more. It can be claimed that it is right and proper to recognize achievement with a financial and therefore tangible reward. This is in accordance with the principle of distributive justice, which while it states that rewards should be provided equitably does not require them to be equal, except when the value of contribution is equal. Financial rewards can also be used to highlight key performance areas, to indicate the behaviours that are valued and generally to emphasize the importance of high performance.

There is plenty of research evidence that financial rewards can improve performance. For example, in the UK this was established by Booth and Frank (1999), Marsden (2004), Prentice *et al* (2007) and Thompson (1998). In the United States, Gupta and Shaw (1998), Jenkins *et al* (1998), Lazear (1999) and Prendergast (1999), amongst others, all found positive relationships between financial incentives and performance.

### Arguments against merit pay

A vociferous chorus of disapproval has been heard on the incentive effect of the financial rewards provided by merit pay. One of the best known and most influential voices was that of Alfie Kohn (1993: 62) who stated in the *Harvard Business Review* that: ‘Rewards, like punishment, may actually undermine

the intrinsic motivation that results in optimal performance. The more a manager stresses what an employee can earn for good work, the less interested that employee will be in the work itself.’ His summary was that ‘bribes in the workplace simply can’t work’ (ibid: 63). Jeffrey Pfeffer (1998: 114) concluded in his equally influential *Harvard Business Review* article, ‘Six dangerous myths about pay’, that: ‘Most merit-pay systems share two attributes: they absorb vast amounts of management time and make everybody unhappy.’

There is a strong body of opinion, at least in academic circles, that financial rewards are bad – because they don’t work and indeed are harmful, while non-financial rewards are good, at least when they provide intrinsic motivation, ie motivation by the work itself.

The detailed arguments against merit pay are that:

- the extent to which merit pay schemes motivate is questionable – the amounts available for distribution are usually so small that they cannot act as an incentive (the IRS 2012 review of pay trends showed that average merit pay increases were worth only 2.9 per cent);
- the requirements for success are exacting and difficult to achieve;
- money by itself will not result in sustained motivation: intrinsic motivation provided by the work itself goes deeper and lasts longer;
- people react in widely different ways to any form of motivation – it cannot be assumed that money will motivate everyone equally yet that is the premise on which merit pay schemes are based;
- financial rewards may possibly motivate those who receive them but they can demotivate those who don’t, and the numbers who are demotivated could be much higher than those who are motivated;
- merit pay schemes can create more dissatisfaction than satisfaction if they are perceived to be unfair, inadequate or badly managed, which can easily be the case;
- employees can be suspicious of schemes because they fear that performance bars will be continuously raised; a scheme may therefore only operate successfully for a limited period;

- schemes depend on the existence of accurate and reliable methods of measuring performance, contribution, competence, or skill, which might not exist;
- individuals are encouraged to emphasize only those aspects of performance that are rewarded;
- merit pay decisions depend on the judgement of managers, which in the absence of reliable criteria can be partial, prejudiced, inconsistent or ill-informed;
- the concept of merit pay is based on the assumption that performance is completely under the control of individuals, when in fact it is affected by the system in which they work;
- merit pay, especially performance-related pay, can militate against quality and teamwork.

These are powerful arguments and further weight to them is supplied by the fact that merit pay schemes are difficult to manage well. Organizations, including the UK Civil Service, rushed into performance-related pay in the 1980s without really understanding how to make it work. Inevitably, problems of implementation arose. Studies such as those conducted by Bowey and Thorpe (1982), Kessler and Purcell (1992), Marsden and Richardson (1994) and Thompson (1992a, 1992b) have all revealed these difficulties. Failures may arise because insufficient attention has been paid to fitting schemes to the context and culture of the organization. But problems are often rooted in implementation and operating difficulties, especially those of inadequate performance management processes, the lack of effective communication and involvement, and line managers who are not capable of or interested in properly carrying out the actions involved. Vicky Wright (1991: 82) remarked that: 'Even the most ardent supporters of performance-related pay recognize that it is difficult to manage well'; Trevor (2011: 201) also questioned the extent to which such systems are manageable.

### Critical evaluation of merit pay

The argument that people should be rewarded in accordance with the value of their contribution is a strong one, but it stands alone. The evidence that

incentives improve performance is conflicting. In some circumstances, as demonstrated by research projects, it works, but in others it doesn't. Most merit pay schemes are unlikely to provide a direct incentive, simply because they do not match demanding requirements such as line of sight and a worthwhile reward. Their main purpose is to recognize the level of contribution, and even this is questionable because of the difficulty of making fair and consistent assessments of performance as a basis for pay decisions. Such schemes can demotivate more people than they motivate.

But what's the alternative? Should everyone be paid the same rate in a job however well they perform? Or should pay be progressed in line with length of service – paying people for being there? For all its problems, the balance of the argument is in favour of some scheme for relating pay to merit. But the difficulties of doing this should be recognized and every attempt should be made to ensure that pay decisions are fair, consistent and transparent. It is also necessary to consider carefully the exacting criteria for success.

### Merit pay – criteria for success

The criteria for effective individual merit pay are:

- Individuals have a clear line of sight between what they do and what they will get for doing it.
- Rewards are worth having.
- Fair and consistent means are available for measuring or assessing performance, competency, contribution or skill.
- People are able to influence their performance by changing their behaviour and developing their competencies and skills.
- The reward follows as closely as possible the accomplishment that generated it.
- The scheme fits the culture of the organization.
- The scheme is manageable and cost-effective.
- The scheme will be supported by well-established methods of measuring performance, competency, contribution or skill.



## Choice of merit pay schemes

If a decision is made to go ahead with merit pay, it should be based on an analysis of the features, advantages, disadvantages and appropriateness of the various schemes – shown in Table 27.3 – against the criteria set out above.

Performance-related pay is the most popular scheme. It was used by 84 per cent of the respondents to the e-reward 2009 survey who had merit pay. It was followed by contribution-related pay (57 per cent), competency-related pay (33 per cent) and skill-based pay (21 per cent).

## Service-related pay

Pay progression in some organizations, especially in the public and voluntary sectors, can be provided by fixed increments on a pay scale or pay spine related to time in the job (service-related pay). There may sometimes be scope for varying the rate of progress up the scale according to performance. Service-related pay is supported by many public sector unions because they perceive it as being fair – everyone is treated equally. It is felt that linking pay to time in the job rather than performance or competence avoids the partial and ill-informed judgements about people that managers are prone to make. Some people believe that the principle of rewarding people for loyalty through continued service is a good one. Service-related pay is also easy to manage; in fact, it does not need to be managed at all.

The arguments against service-related pay are that:

- it is inequitable in the sense that an equal allocation of pay increases according to service does not recognize the fact that some people will be contributing more than others and should be rewarded accordingly;
- it does not encourage good performance; indeed, it rewards poor performance equally;
- it is based on the assumption that performance improves with experience but this is not automatically the case;
- it can be expensive – everyone may drift to the top of the scale, especially in times of low staff turnover, but the cost of their pay is not justified by the added value they provide.

These arguments have convinced most businesses. However, some are concerned about managing any other kind of formal contingent pay scheme, eg merit pay, and are content to rely on spot rates that they can increase informally at will whenever they think someone is worth more. In the public sector, the UK government in 2013 announced its intention to abolish automatic pay increases. There will be strong resistance from the public sector trade unions to this move.

## Team pay

Team pay links payments to members of a formally established team to the performance of that team. The rewards are shared among the members of the team in accordance with a published formula, or on an ad hoc basis in the case of exceptional achievements. Rewards for individuals may also be influenced by assessments of their contribution to team results.

Team pay can enhance cooperative behaviour, encourage flexible working and multiskilling and clarify team goals. It can also persuade less effective performers to improve in order to meet team standards and help to develop self-managed teams. But:

- The effectiveness of team pay depends on the existence of well-defined and mature teams and they may be difficult to identify. Even if they can be, do they need to be motivated by a purely financial reward?
- Team pay may seem unfair to individuals who could feel that their own efforts are unrewarded.
- Pressure to conform, which is accentuated by team pay, could result in the team maintaining its output at lowest common denominator levels – sufficient to gain what is thought collectively to be a reasonable reward but no more.
- It can be difficult to develop performance measures and methods of rating team performance that are seen to be fair – team pay formulae may well be based on arbitrary assumptions about the correct relationship between effort and reward.
- There may be pressure from employees to migrate from poorly performing teams to highly performing teams. If allowed, this

**TABLE 27.3** Summary of individual merit pay schemes

Type of scheme	Main features	Advantages	Disadvantages	When most appropriate
Performance-related pay	Increases to basic pay or bonuses are related to assessment of performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May motivate (but this is uncertain)</li> <li>• Links rewards to objectives</li> <li>• Meets the need to be rewarded for achievement</li> <li>• Delivers message that good performance is important and will be rewarded</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May <i>not</i> motivate</li> <li>• Relies on judgements of performance, which may be subjective</li> <li>• Prejudicial to teamwork</li> <li>• Focuses on outputs, not quality</li> <li>• Relies on good performance management processes</li> <li>• Difficult to manage well</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For people who are likely to be motivated by money</li> <li>• In organizations with a performance-oriented culture</li> <li>• When performance can be measured objectively</li> </ul>
Competency-related pay	Pay increases are related to the level of competency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus attention on need to achieve higher levels of competency</li> <li>• Encourages competency development</li> <li>• Can be integrated with other applications of competency-based HR management</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assessment of competency levels may be difficult</li> <li>• Ignores outputs – danger of paying for competencies that will not be used</li> <li>• Relies on well-trained and committed line managers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As part of an integrated approach to HRM where competencies are used across a number of activities</li> <li>• Where competency is a key factor where it may be inappropriate or hard to measure outputs</li> <li>• Where well-established competency frameworks exist</li> </ul>
Contribution-related pay	Increases in pay or bonuses are related both to inputs (competency) and outputs (performance)	Rewards people not only for what they do but how they do it	As for both PRP and competency-related pay – it may be hard to measure contribution and it is difficult to manage well	When it is believed that a well-rounded approach covering both inputs and outputs is appropriate
Skill-based pay	Increments related to the acquisition of skills	Encourages and rewards the acquisition of skills	Can be expensive when people are paid for skills they don't use	On the shop floor or in retail organizations



could cause disruption and stigmatize the teams from which individuals transfer; if refused it could leave dissatisfied employees in the inadequate teams, making them even worse.

- For many organizations, the disadvantages outweigh the advantages. Perhaps this is why the e-reward 2009 reward survey found that only 11 per cent of respondents had team pay.

### Pay for organizational performance

Many organizations believe that their financial reward systems should extend beyond individual merit pay, which does not recognize collective effort, or team pay, which is difficult. They believe that their system should help to enhance engagement and commitment and convince employees that they have a stake in the business as well as providing them with additional pay. The response to this belief is to offer financial rewards that are related to business or organizational performance (sometimes known as ‘company-wide’ or ‘factory-wide’ schemes).

The three types of formal business performance schemes are:

- *Profit-sharing* – the payment of sums in cash or shares related to the profits of the business.
- *Share schemes* – employees are given the opportunity to take out share options or participate in a save-as-you-earn scheme of a share incentive plan.
- *Gain-sharing* – the payment of cash sums to employees related to the financial gains made by the company because of its improved performance.

### Recognition schemes

Recognition schemes as part of a total reward package enable appreciation to be shown to individuals for their achievements, either informally on a day-to-day basis or through formal recognition arrangements. They can take place quietly between managers and their teamworkers or be visible celebrations of success.

A recognition scheme can be formal and organization-wide, providing scope to recognize achievements

by gifts or treats or by public applause. Typically, the awards are non-financial but some organizations provide cash awards. Importantly, recognition is also given less formally when managers simply say, ‘Well done’, ‘Thank you’, or ‘Congratulations’ – face-to-face or in a brief note of appreciation.

### Employee benefits

Employee benefits consist of arrangements made by employers for their employees that enhance the latter’s well-being. They are provided in addition to pay and form important parts of the total reward package. As part of total remuneration, they may be deferred or contingent such as a pension scheme, insurance cover or sick pay, or they may be immediate such as a company car or a loan. Employee benefits also include holidays and leave arrangements, which are not strictly remuneration. Benefits are sometimes referred to dismissively as ‘perks’ (perquisites) or ‘fringe benefits’, but when they cater for personal security or personal needs they could hardly be described as ‘fringe’. Flexible benefit schemes give employees a choice, within limits, of the type or scale of benefits offered to them by their employers.

Pension provision has undergone considerable change recently. The traditional defined benefit scheme, which provides a pension based on final salary, is disappearing rapidly (too costly) and is being replaced by defined contribution schemes where the retirement pension is whatever annual payment can be purchased with the money accumulated in the fund for a member (cheaper). The 2103 CIPD survey found that the average employer contribution to a defined contribution scheme was 7.9 per cent of salary, while the average employee contribution was 5.0 per cent of salary.

Employee benefits are a costly part of the remuneration package. They can amount to one-third or more of basic pay costs and therefore have to be planned and managed with care.

### Evaluating reward

Reward evaluation uses information obtained from reward reviews and reward measurements to assess the level of effectiveness achieved by existing or new

reward policies and practices. In essence, it is the comparison of reward outcomes with reward objectives to answer the question of how far the reward system has achieved its purpose. The aims are to:

- find out how well established reward policies and practices are working and identify any problems;
- establish whether reward innovations are functioning as planned and achieving the objectives set for them;
- ensure that value for money is obtained from the different parts of the reward system;
- provide the evidence required to indicate what needs to be done to improve reward effectiveness.

A failure to evaluate pay and reward practices is a critical blind-spot for many of those involved in reward management. This was noted by Pfeffer (1998: 213), who wrote that: ‘Little evidence demonstrates the efficacy of rewards, although much evidence indicates that rewards and their design loom large in management attention.’ Gerhart and Rynes (2003: 1) commented that:

Compensation is a complex and often confusing topic. Although compensation costs comprise, on average, 65 per cent to 70 per cent of total costs in the US economy and are likewise substantial elsewhere, most managers are not sure of the likely consequences of spending either more, or less on employees or of paying employees in different ways.

Reward evaluation is a necessary way of improving reward management effectiveness. It is a way of thinking based upon obtaining answers to the following questions posed by Armstrong *et al* (2010: 101):

- What are we trying to do here, what’s important to this organization, how do we measure that?
- How are current reward practices helping or hindering what we are trying to do and what evidence do we have of this?
- How might reward changes improve the delivery of the desired outcomes?
- How can we best implement improvements and how can we show ourselves that they are working?

## Use of an evidence-based management approach

An evidence-based management approach is required to provide a systematic basis for evaluating reward. As Pfeffer (1998: 196) pointed out: ‘Thinking about pay ought to be based on logic and evidence, not on belief or ideology.’ Rousseau (2006: 256) explained that: ‘Evidence-based management means translating principles based on best evidence into organizational practices.’

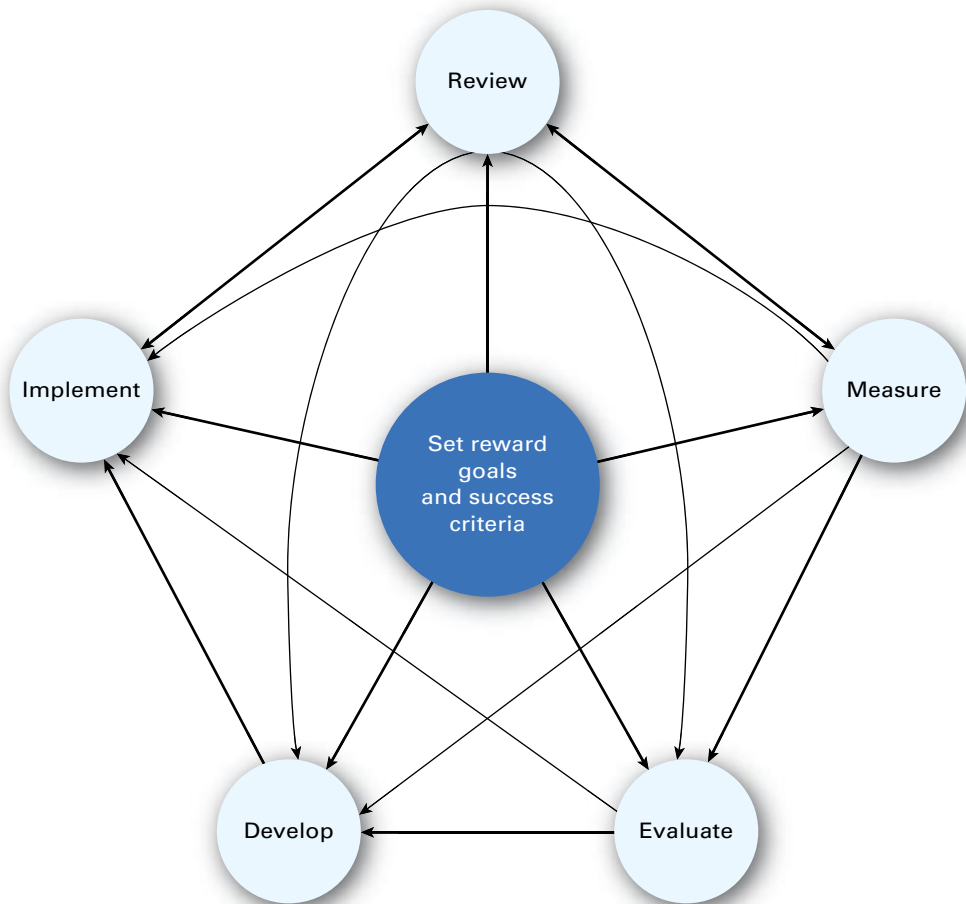
Research conducted by Armstrong *et al* (2011) concluded that there are a number of common components to a process of evidence-based reward management, namely: setting strategic objectives, conducting reward reviews of current policies and practices, measuring reward effectiveness, and using the data generated by reviews and measurements to evaluate reward outcomes as a basis for introducing new or improved reward practices. But these are applied in all sorts of ways; sometimes sequentially, sometimes not, depending on the needs of the situation. A model of how the components function in practice is shown in Figure 27.1. It appears to describe a sequential progress in the form of a continuous cycle, from setting objectives and success criteria, through review, measurement, evaluation, and development activities to implementation and further review. This can happen in some circumstances, for example a review by outside consultants. But, as was established from the research case studies of Armstrong *et al*, in practice the components are not necessarily specified or managed in an orderly sequence. They are closely interlinked and they may overlap. Objective setting, review and measurement affect all the other components, as does evaluation. They can take place at any time (or all at once) and they all directly influence the ultimate activities of development and implementation.

## Advice on reward evaluation

The following advice on reward evaluation was given by a senior reward practitioner in one of the Armstrong *et al* (2011) case study companies:

- 1 The best starting point before setting any targets or measuring anything is to decide what the organization wants to achieve.

**FIGURE 27.1** A model of the interrelationships between the components of evidence-based reward management



- 2 Once this has been decided, you should use as much data as you can and benchmark this against the market, before deciding where the company should be positioned.
- 3 Take care when interpreting data such as high staff satisfaction scores and other perception-related measures – they could simply be reflecting generous, rather than effective, rewards.
- 4 In some cases evaluation is not necessary – it is plain to see when certain elements of the reward system are working or not.

- 5 It is your job to place evidence in context and try to interpret what is really happening and why.

Some of the reward evaluation software packages available, although clever, tend only to use quantitative measures, so they don't take account of some of the other factors that might be at work. This is where you come in – to interpret and make sense of the grey as well as black and white areas.

## Administering reward management

The administration of reward management is conducted through three main activities: base pay management by means of compa-ratio analysis, general pay reviews and individual pay reviews.

### Base pay management through compa-ratio analysis

A compa-ratio (short for ‘comparative ratio’) measures the relationship in a graded pay structure between actual and policy rates of pay as a percentage. The policy value used is the mid-point or reference point in a pay range, which represents the ‘target rate’ for a fully competent individual in any job in the grade. This point is aligned with market rates in accordance with the organization’s market stance.

Compa-ratios can be used to define the extent to which pay policy is achieved (the relationship between the policy and actual rates of pay). The analysis of compa-ratios indicates what action may have to be taken to slow down or accelerate increases if compa-ratios are too high or too low compared with the policy level. This is sometimes called ‘mid-point management’. Compa-ratios can also be used to measure where an individual is placed in a pay range and therefore provide information on the size of pay increases when a pay matrix is used, as described later in this chapter. Compa-ratios are calculated as follows:

$$\frac{\text{actual rate of pay}}{\text{mid or reference point of range}} \times 100$$

A compa-ratio of 100 per cent means that actual pay and policy pay are the same. Compa-ratios higher or lower than 100 per cent mean that, respectively, pay is above or below the policy target rate. For example, if the target (policy) rate in a range were £20,000 and the average pay of all the individuals in the grade were £18,000, the compa-ratio would be 90 per cent. Compa-ratios establish differences between policy and practice. The reasons for such differences need to be established.

### General pay reviews

General reviews take place when employees are given an increase in response to general market rate movements, increases in the cost of living, or union negotiations. General reviews are often combined with individual reviews, but employees are usually informed of both the general and individual components of any increase they receive. Alternatively, the general review may be conducted separately to enable better control to be achieved over costs and to focus employees’ attention on the performance-related aspect of their remuneration.

Some organizations have completely abandoned the use of across-the-board reviews. They argue that the decision on what people should be paid should be an individual matter, taking into account the personal contribution people are making and their ‘market worth’ – how they as individuals are valued in the marketplace. This enables the organization to adopt a more flexible approach to allocating pay increases in accordance with the perceived value of individuals to the organization.

The steps required to conduct a general review are:

- 1 Decide on the budget.
- 2 Analyse data on pay settlements made by comparable organizations and rates of inflation.
- 3 Conduct negotiations with trade unions as required.
- 4 Calculate costs.
- 5 Adjust the pay structure – by either increasing the pay brackets of each grade by the percentage general increase or by increasing pay reference points by the overall percentage and applying different increases to the upper or lower limits of the bracket, thus altering the shape of the structure.
- 6 Inform employees.

### Individual pay reviews

Individual pay reviews determine contingent pay increases or bonuses. The e-reward 2009 survey of contingent pay found that the average size of the pay awards made by respondents was 3.3 per cent. Individual awards may be based on ratings, an overall assessment that does not depend on ratings, or ranking, as discussed below.

## Individual pay reviews based on ratings

Managers propose increases on the basis of their performance management ratings within a given pay review budget and in accordance with pay review guidelines. Of the respondents to the CIPD performance management survey (Armstrong and Baron, 2004) 42 per cent used ratings to inform contingent pay decisions.

There is a choice of methods. The simplest way is to have a direct link between the rating and the pay increase. For example:

Rating	% Increase
A	6
B	4
C	3
D	2
E	0

A more sophisticated approach is to use a pay matrix, as illustrated in Figure 27.2. This indicates the percentage increase payable for different performance ratings according to the position of the individual's pay in the pay range (the individual 'compa-ratio').

Many people argue that linking performance management too explicitly to pay prejudices the essential developmental nature of performance management. However, realistically, it is accepted that decisions on performance-related or contribution-related increases have to be based on some form of assessment. One solution is to 'decouple' performance management and the pay review by holding them several months apart; 45 per cent of the respondents surveyed by Armstrong and Baron (2004) separated performance management reviews from pay reviews (43 per cent of the respondents to the e-reward 2005 survey separated the review). There is still a read-across but it is not so immediate. Some try to do without formulaic approaches (ratings and pay matrices) altogether, although it is impossible to dissociate merit pay completely from some form of assessment.

**FIGURE 27.2** A pay matrix

Percentage pay increase according to performance rating and position in pay range (compa-ratio)				
Rating	Position in pay range			
	80%–90%	91%–100%	101%–110%	111%–120%
Excellent	12%	10%	8%	6%
Very effective	10%	8%	6%	4%
Effective	6%	4%	3%	0
Developing	4%	3%	0	0
Ineligible	0	0	0	0

## Guidelines to managers on conducting individual pay reviews

Guidelines have to be issued to managers on how they should conduct reviews. The guidelines will stipulate that they must keep within their budgets and may indicate the maximum and minimum increases that can be awarded, with an indication of how awards could be distributed. For example, in happy days when the budget is 4 per cent overall, it might be suggested that a 3 per cent increase should be given to the majority of staff and the others given higher or lower increases as long as the total percentage increase does not exceed the budget. Managers in some companies are instructed that they must follow a forced pattern of distribution (a forced choice system), but only 8 per cent of the respondents to the CIPD survey (Armstrong and Baron, 2004) used this method.

## Steps required

The steps required to conduct an individual pay review are:

- Agree the budget.
- Prepare and issue guidelines on the size, range and distribution of awards and on methods of conducting the review.
- Provide advice and support.
- Review proposals against budget and guidelines and agree modifications to them if necessary.
- Summarize and cost proposals and obtain approval.
- Update the payroll.
- Inform employees.

## CASE STUDIES

### Kent County Council: successful reward

The council attributes success in its reward policies to a strong and united political direction from the top; a long-term consistency of purpose, but with the appropriate

phasing of changes and with adaptation to local circumstances; and a high involvement approach.

### McDonald's: demonstrating reward effectiveness

McDonald's is a company with a strong culture of measurement and has built its own people-profit chain methodology to produce impressive evidence that demonstrates how rewards can enhance employee engagement and thereby business performance. The operational and cost

focus in the business means that reward arrangements are reviewed regularly and changed if they are not found to be delivering. But the subtler processes of consultation and change management are equally vital in maintaining and strengthening reward effectiveness.

### The NSPCC: approaches to achieving reward effectiveness

The experience of the NSPCC was that while measures of organizational and reward effectiveness may differ, the delivery of them is every bit as critical, if not more so, in voluntary organizations. It also shows that limited resources need not be a barrier to assessing and demonstrating effectiveness. Establishing links to the core purpose of the

organization was the major driver behind the extensive research undertaken into effectiveness. The culture of the organization and its values were important considerations, as was ensuring that the values of the people in the organization were aligned to them.

## Changing the pay structure at Marks & Spencer

Prior to 2005 there were 429 different rates for customer assistants, ranging from £4.94 per hour for new staff, up to £10 per hour for long-serving employees. In May 2005, M&S announced that it would reduce these to four standard rates for customer assistants (with regional

variations), which would be tied to specific roles – trainee and qualified, which already existed, and two newly created positions: coach and section coordinator. The move was designed to give staff better career progression opportunities.

### Key learning points: The practice of reward management

#### Reward management defined

Reward management is concerned with the strategies, policies and processes required to ensure that the value of people and the contribution they make to achieving organizational, departmental and team goals is recognized and rewarded.

#### Pay determination

Pay determination is the process of deciding on the level of pay for jobs or people. The two aims of pay determination, which frequently conflict, are: 1) to be externally competitive in order to attract, engage and retain the people required by the organization; and 2) to be internally equitable in the sense that rates of pay correctly reflect the relativities between jobs.

#### Market pricing

Market pricing is the process of making decisions on pay structures and individual rates of pay and obtaining information on market rates (market rate analysis). Market rate analysis may be associated with formal job evaluation. The latter establishes internal relativities and the grade structure, and market pricing is used to develop the pay structure – the pay ranges attached to grades. Information on market rates may lead to the introduction of market supplements for individual jobs or the creation of separate pay structures (market groups) to cater for particular market rate pressures.

#### Job evaluation

Job evaluation is a systematic and formal process for defining the relative worth or size of jobs within an organization in order to establish internal relativities. It is carried out through either an analytical or a non-analytical scheme. Analytical job evaluation is based on a process of breaking down whole jobs into a number of defined elements or factors such as responsibility, decisions and the knowledge and skill required. Non-analytical job evaluation schemes enable whole jobs to be compared in order to place them in a grade or a rank order – they are not analysed by reference to their elements or factors.

#### Base pay management

The management of base pay uses the information from market pricing and job evaluation to design and operate grade and pay structures that cater for job-based pay and allow scope for pay to progress within the structure through person-based pay.

#### Grade and pay structures

Grade and pay structures provide a framework within which an organization's pay policies can be implemented. They enable the organization to determine where jobs should be placed in a hierarchy, define pay levels and the scope for pay progression, and provide the basis upon which relativities can be managed, equal pay achieved and the processes of monitoring and controlling the implementation of pay practices can take place.



A grade structure consists of a sequence or hierarchy of grades, bands or levels into which groups of jobs that are broadly comparable in size are placed. A grade structure becomes a pay structure when pay ranges, brackets or scales are attached to each grade, band or level. The main types of grade and pay structures are narrow-graded, broad-graded, broad-banded and pay spines.

### Pay progression

Pay progression takes place when base pay advances through pay ranges or brackets in a grade and pay structure, or through promotions or upgradings.

### Contingent pay

Contingent pay can be related to individual merit or service or to team or organizational performance or a combination of these.

For salary earners, individual contingent pay can take the form of consolidated increases to base pay that provide for pay progression, or cash bonuses (or both). Wage earners may receive unconsolidated cash payments, in addition to their base pay, through an incentive scheme.

### Team pay

Team pay links payments to members of a formally established team to the performance of that team. This is a popular form of reward – the 2009 e-reward survey found that 59 per cent of respondents had such schemes.

### Pay for organizational performance

The provision of financial rewards that are related to business or organizational performance (sometimes known as 'company-wide' or 'factory-wide' schemes). They include profit-sharing, share schemes and gain-sharing.

### Recognition schemes

Recognition schemes as part of a total reward package enable appreciation to be shown to individuals for their achievements, informally on a day-to day basis or through formal recognition arrangements.

### Employee benefits

Employee benefits consist of arrangements made by employers for their employees that enhance the latter's well-being. They are provided in addition to pay and form important parts of the total reward package.

### Evaluating reward

Reward evaluation uses information obtained from reward reviews and reward measurements to assess the level of effectiveness achieved by existing or new reward policies and practices.

### Administering reward management

The administration of reward management is conducted through three main activities: base pay management through compa-ratio analysis, conducting general pay reviews and conducting individual pay reviews.



## Questions

- 1 What is reward management?
- 2 What are the main aims of reward management?
- 3 What is a reward system?
- 4 What is base pay?
- 5 What is contingent pay?
- 6 What are financial rewards?
- 7 What are the main arguments in favour of financial rewards?
- 8 What are the main arguments against financial rewards?
- 9 What is a total rewards approach?
- 10 What is market pricing?
- 11 What is job evaluation?
- 12 What are the main types of job evaluation schemes?
- 13 What is base pay management?
- 14 What is a grade structure?
- 15 What is a pay structure?
- 16 What are the main types of grade and pay structures?
- 17 What are the guiding principles for grade and pay structures?
- 18 What is contingent pay?
- 19 What are the main types of contingent pay?
- 20 What are the main types of individual contingent pay schemes?
- 21 What is team pay?
- 22 What are the main schemes relating rewards to organizational performance?
- 23 What is evidence-based reward management?
- 24 What is a compa-ratio and how is it used?
- 25 What are the steps needed to conduct an individual pay review?

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## 28

# Managing reward for special groups

## KEY CONCEPTS AND TERMS

Agency theory	Segmentation
Commission	Share option schemes
Deferred bonus schemes	Time rates
Measured day work	Tournament theory
Piece work	Work measurement

## LEARNING OUTCOMES

On completing this chapter you should be able to define these key concepts. You should also know about:

- Reward policies and practices for directors and senior executives
- Reward policies and practices for knowledge workers
- Reward policies and practices for sales and customer service staff
- Reward policies and practices for manual workers

## Introduction

Many organizations have one reward system applied to all categories of staff below the level of chief executive. However, others find it necessary to cater for the needs of special groups of staff by adopting

different reward practices. This is called reward segmentation and, as described in this chapter, frequently applies to the methods used for directors and senior executives, knowledge workers, sales and customer service staff and manual workers.

## Rewarding directors and senior executives

Probably no aspect of remuneration has attracted as much attention recently as that of the pay of directors and senior executives, especially since the 2008–09 banking crisis. Searching questions are being asked frequently about the level of remuneration, the basis upon which pay decisions are made, the conditions for earning bonuses, and pension arrangements. A leader in *The Guardian* (2012: 26) commented that: ‘Top pay in America and Britain has gone from being a question of how much bosses can earn, to how much some can extract from their companies.’

### Executive pay levels

Executive pay is out of control. The High Pay Commission (2011) recorded that in 1999 the average annual pay of chief executives in FTSE 100 companies was £1,234,983 compared with the average annual employee pay of £17,803 – a multiple of 69. Ten years later in 2009 the average pay of chief executives was £3,747,000 compared with the average pay for employees of £25,816 – a multiple of 145. It is even worse in the United States where in 1965 CEOs earned on average about twenty times as much as their typical employee. They now earn about two hundred and seventy times as much (Surowiecki, 2013).

The High Pay Commission found evidence that excessive high pay damages companies, is bad for our economy and has negative impacts on society as a whole. At its worst, excessive high pay bears little relation to company success and is rewarding failure. The commission established that between 1998 and 2009 chief executive remuneration quadrupled while share prices have declined. The remuneration of chief executives of FTSE 100 companies rose by 6.7 per cent per year, while earnings per share fell by 1 per cent per year over the same period.

It has been established by research (Canyon and Leech, 1994; Gomez-Mejia and Balkin, 1992; Gregg *et al* 1993) that there is no evidence that the huge increases in pay have resulted in improved company performance.

Why has executive pay grown so much?

The reasons for the growth in executive rewards as explained by Dymond and Murlis (2009) are:

- Agency theory: shareholders must structure the CEO’s pay arrangements to reward behaviours that increase shareholder wealth – this is the most important reason. Agency theory indicates that it is desirable to operate a system of incentives for the agents (directors or managers) of the principles (owners) to motivate and reward acceptable behaviour.
- Tournament theory: the high rewards received by CEOs have little to do with what they deserve. Rather, the main purpose of such rewards is to send signals to senior managers to motivate them to compete for the number one spot. Tournament theory states that the highest prizes (pay) of all are given to the person who wins the tournament by getting the top job.
- The changing nature of companies and the increasing demands made on chief executives.
- Star culture: the creation of the celebrity CEO.
- The talent shortage.
- Pay disclosure in annual reports leading to demands from CEOs to achieve parity.
- Peer group analysis – as Elson and Ferrere (2012: 108) observed: ‘Boards typically gravitate in fixing compensation to a set of arbitrary targets – ie, the 50th, 75th, and 90th percentiles of peer group pay. A blind reliance on these pay targets has resulted in a mathematically based upward pay spiral. This dynamic is popularly referred to as the ‘Lake Wobegon’ effect. [A phrase from the Garrison Keeler book *Lake Wobegon Days* referring to a situation in which all or nearly all of a group claim to be above average].

### Corporate governance and executive remuneration

Corporate governance is the internal set of processes and policies that determine the way a corporation is directed and controlled, and serve the needs of shareholders and other stakeholders. It involves the board of a company and includes how members of that board are remunerated. The Combined Code on Corporate Governance produced by the Financial Reporting Council in 2008 laid down general

principles of governance and a number of specific principles relating to the remuneration of directors. These are:

- Levels of remuneration should be sufficient to attract, retain and motivate directors of the quality required to run the company successfully, but a company should avoid paying more than is necessary for this purpose. A significant proportion of executive directors' remuneration should be structured so as to link rewards to corporate and individual performance.
- The remuneration committee should judge where to position their company relative to other companies. But they should use such comparisons with caution, in view of the risk of an upward ratchet of remuneration levels with no corresponding improvement in performance. They should also be sensitive to pay and employment conditions elsewhere in the group, especially when determining annual salary increases.
- The performance-related elements of remuneration should form a significant proportion of the total remuneration package of executive directors and should be designed to align their interests with those of shareholders and to give these directors keen incentives to perform at the highest levels.
- The remuneration committee should consider whether the directors should be eligible for annual bonuses. If so, performance conditions should be relevant, stretching and designed to enhance shareholder value. Upper limits should be set and disclosed. There may be a case for part payment in shares to be held for a significant period.
- Payouts or grants under all incentive schemes, including new grants under existing share option schemes, should be subject to challenging performance criteria that reflect the company's objectives. The total rewards potentially available should not be excessive.
- The remuneration committee should consider the pension consequences and associated costs to the company of basic salary increases and any other changes in pensionable remuneration, especially for directors close to retirement.

But it seems that these principles are frequently more honoured in the breach than in the observance.

## **The elements of executive remuneration**

The main elements of executive remuneration are basic pay, short- and long-term bonus or incentive schemes, share option and share ownership schemes, benefits and service contracts. The salary is usually a one-off, negotiated rate and commonly incorporates a golden hello or pay-off deal. It should be set through a remuneration committee that meets good practice guidelines.

### **Basic pay**

Decisions on the base salary of directors and senior executives are usually founded on views about the market worth of the individuals concerned. Remuneration on joining the company is commonly settled by negotiation, often subject to the approval of a remuneration committee. Reviews of base salaries are then undertaken by reference to market movements and success as measured by company performance. Decisions on base salary are important not only in themselves but also because the level may influence decisions on the pay of both senior and middle managers. Bonuses are expressed as a percentage of base salary, share options may be allocated as a declared multiple of basic pay and, commonly, pension will be a generous proportion of final salary.

### **Bonus schemes**

Virtually all major employers in the UK have incentive (bonus) schemes for senior executives. Bonus schemes provide directors and executives with cash sums or shares based on the measures of company and, frequently, individual performance. They are often paid annually but can be deferred for a longer period.

Typically, bonus payments are linked to achievement of profit and/or other financial targets and they are sometimes 'capped'; that is, a restriction is placed on the maximum amount payable. There may also be elements related to achieving specific goals and to individual performance. Bonuses tend to be high – 70 per cent of base salary or more. They

are ostensibly intended to motivate directors to achieve performance improvements for the business. A more common although not always disclosed reason for bonuses is to ensure that what is believed to be a competitive remuneration package is available: 'Everyone else is doing it so we must too.'

One of the problems with high bonus expectations is that of the 'moral hazard' involved. For example, directors might be tempted to manipulate reported profits in order to drive up the share price, frequently an important determinant of bonuses. Or they may go for high returns in risky short-term projects, ignoring the possible downside of longer-term losses.

Executives may benefit by receiving bonuses for performance that meets objectives but they do not usually lose pay when their objectives are not achieved. They only gain, they never lose. It can be argued that they should get their base salary for doing their jobs, ie achieving their objectives, and only receive more in the shape of a bonus if they exceed expectations. It could also be argued that if they fail to meet their objectives they should be penalized by not receiving a portion of their base salary, which would then truly be pay-at-risk. Earn-back pay schemes try to remedy this situation. Such schemes require executives to meet agreed objectives in order to earn back an element of base pay placed at risk. If they do not succeed against the objectives, some or all of the earn-back pay will be lost.

## Long-term bonuses

Cash bonus schemes can be extended over periods of more than one year on the grounds that annual bonuses focus too much on short-term results. The most common approach to providing longer-term rewards is through share ownership schemes, as described later.

## Deferred bonus schemes

Some companies have adopted deferred bonus schemes under which part of the executive's annual bonus is deferred for, say, two years. The deferred element is converted into shares, each of which is matched with an extra, free share on condition that the executive remains employed by the company at the end of the deferral period. Such a scheme is designed to reward performance and loyalty to the company.

## Share option schemes

Many companies have share option schemes that give directors and executives the right to buy a block of shares on some future date at the share price ruling when the option was granted. They are a form of long-term incentive on the assumption that executives will be motivated to perform more effectively if they can anticipate a substantial capital gain when they sell their shares at a price above that prevailing when they took up the option.

## Performance share schemes

Some companies have performance share schemes under which executives are provisionally awarded shares. The release of the shares is subject to the company's performance, typically determined on a sliding scale by reference to the company's total shareholder return (a combination of share price growth and dividend yield) ranking against its chosen peer companies over a three-year period. Release is also conditional on the executive remaining employed by the company at the vesting date. Such a scheme rewards loyalty to the company and the value delivered to shareholders in the form of share price performance and dividends but does not link directly to business performance.

## Executive restricted share schemes

Under such schemes free shares are provisionally awarded to participants. These shares do not belong to the executive until they are released or vested; hence they are 'restricted'. The number of shares actually released to the executive at the end of a defined period (usually three or, less commonly, five years) will depend on performance over that period against specific targets. Thereafter there may be a further retention period when the shares must be held, although no further performance conditions apply.

## Benefits

Employee benefits for executives may amount to over 20 per cent of the total reward package. The most important element is the pension scheme, and directors may be provided with a much higher accrual rate than in a typical final salary scheme. This means that, typically, the maximum two-thirds pension can be achieved after 20 years' service or

even less, rather than the 40 years it takes in a typical one-sixtieth scheme. Pensions are easily inflated, as demonstrated in a recent notorious case, by presenting the departing director with a last-minute substantial increase in pensionable salary.

### Service contracts

Long-term service contracts for directors – ie more than one year – have been fairly typical, but they are disliked in the City because of the high severance payments to departing chief executives and directors that are made if the contract is two or three years, even when it was suspected or actually the case that they had been voted off the board because of inadequate performance. Rolling contracts for directors are now more likely to be restricted to one year.

## Rewarding knowledge workers

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Knowledge workers are people whose jobs require expertise. Their work is defined by the knowledge they need to do it. The term therefore embraces such diverse groups as scientists, accountants, HR professionals, IT specialists, lawyers, media workers and researchers. This is an area of reward management where segmentation may be appropriate.

The nature of knowledge work, especially in smaller high-tech organizations such as software houses, means that a more flexible approach to pay is required, which pays close attention to levels of competence and skill. For example, the fluid grading system used in the scientific civil service allows for much more flexibility in rewarding scientists in line with their levels of competence rather than by the levels of responsibility that characterize traditional multigraded structures.

### *Pay flexibility*

The overall approach to rewarding knowledge workers should be flexibility within a framework. This means that a common framework of reward policies exists across the organization but within that framework segmentation can take place. Pay arrangements can then be tailored to suit the needs of particular groups of knowledge and professional

workers and the individuals within those groups. Pay flexibility could include market rate supplements to attract and retain specific categories of staff and the use of selected market groups (separate pay structures for certain types of staff).

### *Pay related to competency*

If knowledge workers apply their expertise then it seems reasonable to reward them according to the level of expertise (competency) they possess and apply. There are three ways of doing this: 1) by competency-related pay; 2) through structures in which grades or bands are defined in competency terms; and 3) the incorporation of skills and competencies into job evaluation factor plans.

### *Job and career families*

Job and career-family structures consist of separate families of jobs with similar characteristics. Within each family the successive levels of competency required to carry out typical activities are defined, thus indicating career paths. They are particularly appropriate for knowledge workers because they spell out the career ladders that apply specifically to the different categories employed in an organization.

## Reward management for sales and customer service staff

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Sales and customer service staff make an immediate impact on business results. This has led to an emphasis on financial incentives, especially for sales representatives and sales staff in retailers, who are often treated quite differently from other employees. The reward system for sales and service staff also has to take account of the fact that they are the people who are in direct contact with customers, and this also applies to people in call centres.

There are no hard-and-fast rules governing how sales representatives or customer service staff should be paid. It depends on the type of company, the products or services it offers its customers and the nature of the sales process – how sales are organized and made.



## Rewarding sales representatives

Sales representatives are more likely to be eligible for commission payments or bonuses than other staff, on the grounds that their sales performance will depend on or at least be improved by financial incentives. Many companies believe that the special nature of selling and the type of person they need to attract to their sales force requires some form of additional bonus or commission to be paid. The

nature of the work of sales staff means that it is usually easy to specify targets and measure performance against them, and sales incentive schemes are therefore more likely to meet the line of sight requirement (ie that there should be a clear link between effort and performance) than schemes for other staff such as managers and administrators. Sales staff, including those in retail establishments, are often paid spot rates with a commission on sales. See Table 28.1.

**TABLE 28.1** Summary of payment and incentive arrangements for sales staff

Method	Features	Advantages	Disadvantages	When appropriate
Salary only	Straight salary, no commission or bonus	Encourage customer service rather than high-pressure selling; deal with the problem of staff who are working in a new or unproductive sales territory; protects income when sales fluctuate for reasons beyond the individual's control	No direct motivation through money; may attract underachieving people who are subsidized by high achievers; increases fixed costs of sales because pay costs are not flexed with sales results	When representing the company is more important than direct selling; staff have little influence on sales volume (they may simply be 'order takers'); customer service is all-important
Salary plus commission	Basic salary plus cash commission calculated as a percentage of sales volume or value	Direct financial motivation is provided, related to what sales staff are there to do, ie generate sales; but they are not entirely dependent on commission – they are cushioned by their base salary	Relating pay to the volume or value of sales is too crude an approach and may result in staff going for volume by concentrating on the easier to sell products not those generating high margins; may encourage high-pressure selling as in some financial services firms in the 1980s and 90s	When it is believed that the way to get more sales is to link extra money to results but a base salary is still needed to attract the many people who want to be assured of a reasonable basic salary that will not fluctuate but who still aspire to increase that salary by their own efforts



**TABLE 28.1** Continued

Method	Features	Advantages	Disadvantages	When appropriate
Salary plus bonus	Basic salary plus cash bonus based on achieving and exceeding sales targets or quotas and meeting other selling objectives	Provide financial motivation but targets or objectives can be flexed to ensure that particular sales goals are achieved, eg high margin sales, customer service	Do not have a clear line of sight between effort and reward; may be complex to administer; sales representative may find them hard to understand and resent the use of subjective judgements on performance other than sales	When: flexibility in providing rewards is important; it is felt that sales staff need to be motivated to focus on aspects of their work other than simply maximizing sales volume
Commission only	Only commission based on a percentage of sales volume or value is paid, there is no basic salary	Provide a direct financial incentive; attract high-performing sales staff; ensure that selling costs vary directly with sales; little direct supervision required	Lead to high-pressure selling; may attract the wrong sort of people who are interested only in sales and not customer service; focus attention on high volume rather than profitability	When: sales performance depends mainly on selling ability and can be measured by immediate sales results; staff are not involved in non-selling activities; continuing relationships with customers are relatively unimportant
Additional non-cash rewards	Incentives, prizes, cars, recognition, opportunities to grow	Utilize powerful non-financial motivators	May be difficult to administer; do not provide a direct incentive	When it is believed that other methods of payment need to be enhanced by providing additional motivators

### **Rewarding customer service staff**

Customer service staff work mainly in retail establishments and in call or customer contact centres. Their rewards need to reflect the nature of their duties, ie enhancing levels of customer service as well as selling.

Research conducted by West *et al* (2005) established that most employees in the researched organizations had the opportunity to progress their base pay on the basis of their performance or competence, either through a range or up a pay spine, or between grades/levels of job. Such arrangements have generally supplanted spot rates for service roles in call centres

and retail shops. Low base pay/high commission arrangements were rare.

At Boots the chemists, shop staff can progress up through a number of pay points according to their level of performance and skill – from entry level, to experienced, to advanced, to expert/specialist. At B&Q, customer advisers are paid on one of six different spot rates. Pay progression is based on the acquisition – and application on the shop floor – of skills and knowledge. There are four additional spot rates beyond the established rate, designed to reward high performance. Each additional level represents an hourly increase up to a maximum rate. At House of Fraser, employees are allocated to one of four competency bands – training, bronze, silver and gold – with staff assessed for a ‘promotion’ every six months. At Lands’ End, there is a six-grade pay structure for hourly paid staff, with spot rates for starters.

## Paying manual workers

The pay of manual workers takes the form of time rates, also known as day rates, day work, flat rates or hourly rates. Incentive payments by means of payment-by-results schemes may be made on top of a base rate.

### Time rates

These provide workers with a predetermined rate for the actual hours they work. Time rates on their own are most commonly used when it is thought that it is impossible or undesirable to use a payment-by-results system, for example in maintenance work. From the viewpoint of employees the advantage of time rates is that their earnings are predictable and steady and they do not have to engage in endless arguments with rate fixers and supervisors about piece rate or time allowances. The argument against them is that they do not provide a direct incentive relating the reward to the effort or the results. Two ways of modifying the basic time rate approach are to adopt high day rates, as described below, or measured day work.

Time rates may take the form of what are often called high day rates. These are higher than the

minimum time rate and may contain a consolidated bonus rate element. The underlying assumption is that higher base rates will encourage greater effort without the problems created when operating an incentive scheme. High day rates are usually above the local market rates in order to attract and retain workers.

### Pay structures

Pay systems for manual workers are seldom graded in the ways described in Chapter 27 unless their conditions have been harmonized. Time rates are usually paid in the form of spot rates: that is, a fixed rate for a job or an individual. However, spot rates may be designated for different levels of skill. A person-based pay system may be adopted with three basic rates of pay attached to people – unskilled, semi-skilled and skilled – above which there might be special rates for highly skilled occupations such as toolmakers. Earnings from payment-by-result schemes were added to these rates. Other arrangements include the use of a more discerning hierarchy of rates linked to skill levels (a type of skills-based pay), a job-based pay system with different rates for different jobs, or individual job grades that are, in effect, spot rates to which there is a defined pay to provide scope for pay progression based on performance.

### Payment-by-result schemes

Payment-by-result (PBR) schemes provide incentives to workers by relating their pay or, more usually, part of their pay to the number of items they produce or the time taken to do a certain amount of work. The main types of PBR or incentive schemes for individuals are piece work, work-measured schemes, measured day work and performance-related pay. Team bonus schemes are an alternative to individual PBR, and plant-wide schemes can produce bonuses that are paid instead of individual or team bonuses, or in addition to them. Each of these methods is described in Table 28.2 together with an assessment of their advantages and disadvantages for employers and employees and when they are appropriate.

**TABLE 28.2** Comparison of shop floor payment-by-result schemes

Scheme	Main features	For employers		For employees		When appropriate
		Advantages	Disadvantages	Advantages	Disadvantages	
Piece work	Bonus directly related to output.	Direct motivation; simple, easy to operate.	Lose control over output; quality problems.	Predict and control earnings in the short-term; regulate pace of work themselves.	More difficult to predict and control earnings in the longer-term; work may be stressful and produce RSI.	Fairly limited application to work involving unit production controlled by the person, eg agriculture, garment manufacture.
Work-measured schemes	Work measurement used to determine standard output levels over a period or standard times for job/tasks; bonus based by reference to performance ratings compared with actual performance or time saved.	Provides what appears to be a 'scientific' method of relating reward to performance; can produce significant increases in productivity, at least in the short-term.	Schemes are expensive, time-consuming and difficult to run and can too easily degenerate and cause wage drift because of loose rates.	Appear to provide a more objective method of relating pay to performance; employees can be involved in the rating process to ensure fairness.	Ratings are still prone to subjective judgement and earnings can fluctuate because of changes in work requirements outside the control of employees.	For short-cycle repetitive work where changes in the work mix or design changes are infrequent, down time is restricted, and management and supervision are capable of managing and maintaining the scheme.
Measured day work	Pay fixed at a high rate on the understanding that a high level of performance against work-measured standards will be maintained.	Employees are under an obligation to work at the specified level of performance.	Performance targets can become easily attained norms and may be difficult to change.	High predictable earnings are provided.	No opportunities for individuals to be rewarded in line with their own efforts.	Everyone must be totally committed to making it work; high standards of work measurement are essential; good control systems to identify shortfalls on targets.

**TABLE 28.2** Continued

Scheme	Main features	For employers		For employees		When appropriate
		Advantages	Disadvantages	Advantages	Disadvantages	
Performance-related pay	Payments on top of base rate are made, related to individual assessments of performance.	Reward individual contribution without resource to work measurement; relevant in high technology manufacturing.	Measuring performance can be difficult; no direct incentive provided.	Opportunity to be rewarded for own efforts without having to submit to a pressured PBR system.	Assessment informing performance pay decisions may be biased, inconsistent or unsupported by evidence.	As part of a reward harmonization (shop floor and staff) programme; as an alternative to work-measured schemes or an enhancement of a high day rate system.
Group or team basis	Groups or teams are paid bonuses on the basis of their performance as indicated by work measurement ratings or the achievement of targets.	Encourage team co-operation and effort; not too individualized.	Direct incentive may be limited; depends on good work measurement or the availability of clear group output or productivity targets.	Bonuses can be related clearly to the joint efforts of the group; fluctuations in earnings minimized.	Depend on effective work measurement, which is not always available; individual effort and contribution not recognized.	When team working is important and team efforts can be accurately measured and assessed; as an alternative to individual PBR if this is not effective.
Factory-wide bonuses	Bonuses related to plant performance – added value or productivity.	Increase commitment by sharing success.	No direct motivation.	Earnings increased without individual pressure.	Bonuses often small and unpredictable.	As an addition to other forms of incentive when increasing commitment is important.

### Key learning points: Managing reward for special groups

#### Segmentation

Many organizations have one reward system applied to all categories of staff below the level of chief executive. However, others find it necessary to cater for the needs of special groups of staff by adopting different reward practices. This is called reward segmentation.

#### Executive pay levels

Executive pay is out of control. The reasons are:

- Tournament theory: the increasing demands made on chief executives.
- Star culture: the creation of the celebrity CEO.
- The talent shortage.
- Pay disclosure in annual reports lead to demands from CEOs to achieve parity.

#### Elements of directors' and senior executives' pay

Basic, pay, bonus schemes, share options, executive restricted share schemes.

#### Rewarding knowledge workers

The nature of knowledge work, especially in smaller high-tech organizations such as software houses, means that a more flexible approach to pay is required that gives close attention to levels of competence and skill.

#### Payment and incentive schemes for sales staff

Summarized in Table 28.1.

#### Pay for customer service staff

Customer service staff usually have the opportunity to progress their base pay on the basis of their performance or competence, either through a range or up a pay spine, or between grades/levels of job.

#### Pay for manual workers

The pay of manual workers takes the form of time rates, also known as day rates, day work, flat rates or hourly rates. Incentive payments by means of payment-by-results scheme, as summarized in Table 28.2, may be made on top of a base rate.

## Questions

- 1 What is the function of a remuneration committee?
- 2 What is a knowledge worker?
- 3 How should knowledge workers be rewarded?
- 4 What are the main methods of rewarding sales staff?
- 5 What are the advantages and disadvantages for employers and employees of work-measured payment-by-result schemes?

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# PART VII

## Employee relations

### PART VII CONTENTS

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- 29** Strategic employee relations
- 30** The employment relationship
- 31** The psychological contract
- 32** The practice of industrial relations
- 33** Employee voice
- 34** Employee communications

### Introduction

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Employee relations are concerned with managing the employment relationship and the psychological contract. They consist of the approaches and methods adopted by employers to deal with employees either collectively through their trade unions or individually. This includes providing employees with a voice and developing communications between them and management.

Employee relations cover a wider spectrum of the employment relationship than industrial relations, which are essentially about what goes on between management and trade union representatives and officials, involving collective agreements, collective bargaining and disputes resolution. This wider definition recognizes the move away from collectivism towards individualism in the ways in which employees relate to their employers.

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## 29

# Strategic employee relations

## KEY CONCEPTS AND TERMS

Collectivism

Derecognition

Employee relations

Employee relations climate

Individualism

Industrial relations

Mutuality

Pay-work bargain

Pluralist viewpoint

Single-table bargaining

Union recognition

## LEARNING OUTCOMES

On completing this chapter you should be able to define these key concepts. You should also know about:

- The process of employee relations
- The basis of employee relations
- Employee relations policies
- Employee relations strategies
- The employee relations climate
- Managing with and without unions

## Introduction

Strategic employee relations is concerned with the formulation and implementation of plans designed to meet the needs of the business for harmonious and productive relationships and the needs of employees

to be treated justly and well. These plans will be based on the organization's policies on how it should relate to employees and their unions.

Against the background of definitions of the process and basis of employee relations, this chapter examines in turn employee relations policies and

strategies, the development of a satisfactory employee relations climate and what happens when organizations work with or without unions.

## The process of employee relations

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Employee relations are concerned with managing and maintaining the employment relationship, taking into account the implications of the notion of the psychological contract (these concepts are discussed in the next two chapters). This means dealing with employees either collectively through their trade unions or individually; handling employment practices, terms and conditions of employment and issues arising from employment; and providing employees with a voice and communicating with employees.

## The basis of employee relations

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Employee relations are basically about how managements and employees live together and what can be done to make that work. There are two views about the relationship. The unitary viewpoint is the belief that management and employees share the same concerns and it is therefore in both their interests to cooperate. This was expressed by Walton (1985: 64) as the principle of mutuality. A similar belief is expressed in the idea of social partnership, which states that as stakeholders, the parties involved in employee relations should aim to work together to the greater good of all. Partnership agreements, as described in Chapter 32, try to put this idea into practice.

In contrast, the pluralist viewpoint is that the interests of employees will not necessarily coincide with their employers and that the unitary view is naive, unrealistic and against the interests of employees. People of this persuasion don't believe that partnership agreements can work.

The basis of employee relations can be described somewhat simplistically in terms of the pay-work bargain – the agreement made between employers and employees whereby the former undertakes to pay for the work done by the latter. According to

this notion, many employers simply want employees who will do what they are told without costing too much. They want engagement and commitment on their own terms. But employees want a 'fair day's pay for a fair day's work' and a say in their terms and conditions of employment and the way in which their work is organized. They want security of employment, good working conditions, a healthy and safe working environment and the scope to raise and resolve grievances. Conflicts of interest can arise between employers and employees on these issues, and where there are unions these conflicts are resolved by the various industrial relations procedures described in Chapter 32. Because of this, employee relations need to be managed by reference to understood and communicated policies and strategies.

## Employee relations policies

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Employee relations policies express the philosophy of the organization on what sort of relationships are wanted between management and employees and, where necessary, their unions, and how the pay-work bargain should be managed. A social partnership policy will aim to develop and maintain a positive, productive, cooperative and trusting climate of employee relations.

## Approaches

There are four approaches to employee relations:

- 1 **Adversarial:** the organization decides what it wants to do, and employees are expected to fit in. Employees only exercise power by refusing to cooperate.
- 2 **Traditional:** a reasonably good day-to-day working relationship but management proposes and the workforce reacts through its elected representatives, if there are any; if not, employees just accept the situation or walk.
- 3 **Partnership:** the organization involves employees in the drawing up and execution of organization policies, but retains the right to manage.
- 4 **Power sharing:** employees are involved in both day-to-day and strategic decision-making.