



LEVERAGING TECHNOLOGY TO ADD VALUE THROUGH STRATEGIC HR MANAGEMENT

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“Leveraging Technology to Add Value through Strategic HR Management”

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1. Executive Summary

In turbulent economic times challenges such as modernization, globalization and developing talent are compounded with an increased need for agility in business structures and financing. With a global recession, compressed margins and possible needs for downsizing at the forefront of executives' minds it is often difficult to focus on opportunities for revitalizing the company and preparing for the future. The most successful companies will be those which are able to ride out the storm and emerge stronger than before through capable management and future oriented strategic planning.

Management of human resources, often seen as an administrative center, presents one of the most powerful opportunities to increase vitality and improve future positioning. Getting more from HR requires the perception that HR Management can both control cost and add new value by being positioned as a strategic function of the business. However, the ability of HR Managers to effectively provide high impact business solutions is dependent on a strong, automated business process to effectively administer HR related operations.

With HR administration running smoothly, executives and HR professionals are able to focus on improving talent, better aligning employees with the corporation's strategic goals, improving performance and increasing levels of employee engagement. Advanced HRM technology allows the standardization, promotion and measurement of this process while ensuring that substantial improvements are achievable within existing HRM budgets.

2. Introduction

Increasing sustainable competitive advantage by transitioning human resource management from an administrative to strategic focus requires businesses to combine new conceptual best practices with technology automation and standardization. Management must determine the priorities under which human resource management improvements can contribute to current and future performance and remove obstacles that prevent the effective implementation of these improvements. Increased automation of HR related administration is often the first of these challenges.

Efficient administration releases resources to focus on improving the productivity of the company's human resources in the short term and aligning talent to achieve longer term objectives. Targets such as talent management, improved recruitment, productivity improvements and goal alignment need to be moved outside the boardroom and enabled throughout the entire organization.

3. Background

Increases in the complexity of business dealings combined with turbulent economic times have increased pressure on HR departments to deliver more. While many executives view the HR department as an administrative cost center, market leaders are increasingly turning to HR professionals to add value in new ways. As these concepts emerge, traditional HR departments struggle to reorganize and adopt a new perspective of their roles.

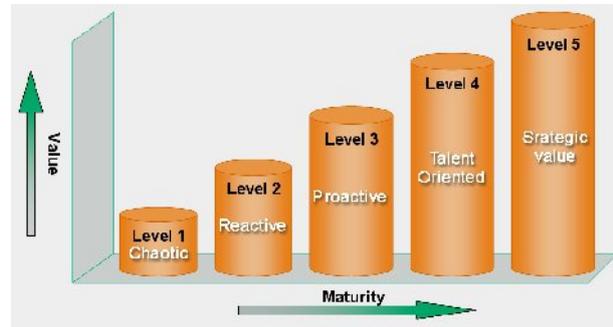


Figure 1. Evolution of HR Functions

The transition of HR Management from an administrative to strategic function requires development of a value chain as depicted in Figure 1 above whereas the ability to move along the chain is dependent on stabilizing the preceding level. Businesses operating in a chaotic HR management environment characterized by difficulty in tracking head count, processing payroll and tracking employee data are often so overworked with ‘firefighting’ that any thought of proactively contributing to efficient HRM practices is considered unrealistic.

4. Maximizing Value by Minimizing Administration through Automation

Despite the ongoing debate about the evolution of the human resource management functions, the reality is that in most companies HRD still spends most of its time and money on the necessary, but low value activities such as administrative and operational tasks generally comprised of personnel data collection, payroll and reimbursement processing, work time scheduling, overtime calculation, reporting, inquiries, etc.

According to ADP surveys, generally only ten percent of the time is directed towards activities related to mid and long-term personnel planning, HR strategies, policy formulation, and executive consulting (see Figure 2 on the right side).

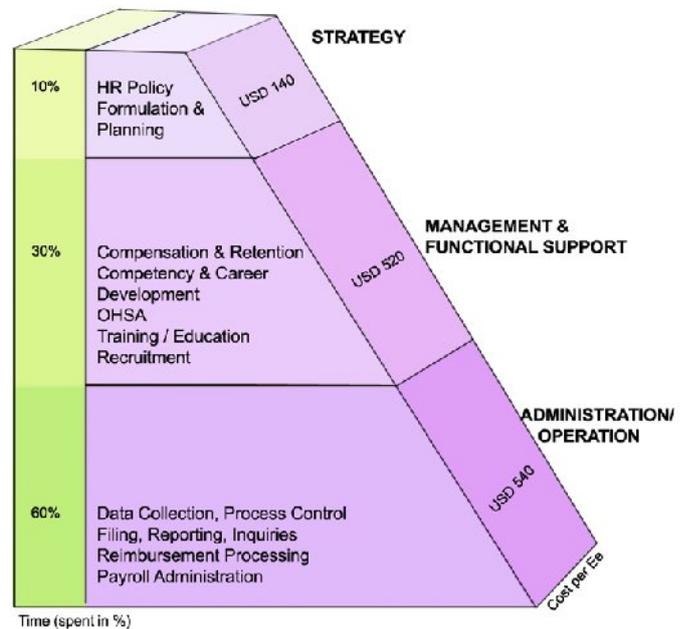


Figure 2. Expenses and Time spent on different HR Activities

Gently inverting this pyramid allows companies to move along the HR Management evolutionary path from the lower level administrative tasks towards a strategic value partner. As administration cannot be left behind and tends to become even more complex, in order to be able to invert the HR activity pyramid; the HR Department needs to implement technology that effectively supports its basic operations. Underpinning existing fundamental HR structures with technology automates workflows related to employee

record keeping and data entry, head counts, reporting, data distribution, attendance tracking, payroll and overtime processing, which ultimately provides for a reduction of administration efforts, inefficiencies and costs. The process requires the combination of well defined business processes with well implemented technology solutions.

In order to enable a truly effective administration, executives should review existing HR technology to ensure that the following tools are available, efficient and utilized:

1. Employee Self-Service (ESS): allows employees, managers and executives to interact efficiently, accurately and electronically starting with administrative responsibilities such as employees being able to review their own data and initiate updates to their profile data as well as to review leave utilization, reimbursement expense maximums, pay history, to start approval processes for a broad range of requests including leave, sick days, overtime, loans, training participation, career movement, and so on. Allowing employees access to their own data and participation in HR administration not only simplifies the process, but also provides a platform for more complex interactions in the future.
2. Electronic Employee Records: significantly minimizes administration efforts and time through employee data centralization in one location. This requires employee data to be instantaneously available to the HR department, management and the employees themselves.
3. Automated Time Attendance: automates the entirety of the time & attendance management task through intertwining all attendance aspects such as leave, business trip and sick management; work schedule assignment, work hours recording, and overtime calculation with each other. This transparency into each attendance issue allows performing processing tasks immediately without wasting valuable time and effort on searching and matching related separated paper records and brings new levels of analytics which allow management to properly allocate the workforce improving productivity while reducing cost.
4. Electronic Scheduling: must support a flexible system to define an unlimited number of shift and work patterns, and combine them in multiple working schedule variations as well as flexibly assigning them to employees based on divisions, groups or preferences while at the same time having the ability to transparently move daily shifts around to temporarily cover the hours of employees that are absent on a certain day. Automation of scheduling brings new management alternatives to labor allocation that traditional static shift based scheduling may not have allowed.
5. Electronic Overtime Tracking: technology allows the set up of a variety of rules for overtime, controlling limits, payment methods, etc. that, once configured, are automatically tracked in relation with working schedules and attendance recording as well as overtime approvals. Moreover, based on set up parameters and formulas technology is able to automatically relate overtime to the payroll and include it in the salary payment process. Utilization of overtime is a critical tool to right sizing the

workforce whereas high overtime is costly and extremely low overtime often indicates an oversized workforce. Without automated methods, the important function of overtime is often difficult to effectively administer.

6. Automated Salary Processing and Deductions: technology streamlines the payroll calculation and processing workflow greatly by bringing together data to be included in this process from 3rd party deduction such as Insurance, time and attendance for regular and overtime hours worked to calculate benefits as well as from reimbursement for approved expenses to be paid with the salary or from loans to deduct installment payments from the salary. Moreover, it integrates tools that simplify tax filing, government reporting, bank transfers, and pay slips. Automated processing allowing implementation of increasingly complex methods of compensation creates options for using pay as a motivator towards performance or talent development goals.
7. Automated Government Compliance Reporting: Government reporting and compliance assurance is time consuming but mandatory. Technology can often completely automate this process reducing its cost while improving accuracy.
8. Digital Organization Charts: supports the needs of HRD to manage, review and modify organizational structures effectively including the identification of empty or unproductive positions. It provides an improved method of taking control of HRD's tasks to plan position fulfillment and succession planning for the entire organization.
9. Interactive Man Power Planning: technology provides tools that allow HRD, supervisors and executives to collaborate in the processes of matching the workforce supply to position needs at organizational and/or regional levels. Input of all three parties regarding current resources, forecasting future requirements and availability is required in order to successfully ensure an optimal balance between growth and efficiency.
10. Automated Budgeting Tools: technology allows the definition of budgets from all HR management areas for payroll payments, wage increases, reimbursement, recruitment, training, etc. Once set up it will automatically deduct occurring transactions for each budget item and as such provide a powerful analysis tool to review budget allocation as well as overruns and thus identify areas for better cost control.
11. Online Reporting: Reporting and analysis to executives is a major task of the HRD. The implementation of technology allows a much broader variety of methods to view and detail drill-down than is possible on paper. Reports can be quickly produced based on a broad range of criteria useful for analysis, auditing and consulting and display data in real time.

Automation of basic HR tasks such as those above lays the foundation for the Human Resource Department to take on a more strategic role.

5. Strategic Functions - Concepts and Tools of Strategic HR Management

The strategic functions of Human Resource Management are aimed at managing the talent in an organization. The goal is to implement initiatives that drive performance of the individual and the organization towards the company’s growth objectives that are nescitated by the business environment. The strategic areas of HR generally include:

- The improvement of skills and competence in existing employees, including the development of new skill sets to prepare them for more responsibility and position advancement;
- The hiring of the right people at the right time with desired competence and leadership potential;
- The retaining of talented people who can take on new roles arising out of strategic moves.

As such the strategic HR functions emphasize on management processes such as recruitment, skill & competency development, allocation of goals aligned to corporate strategies, performance management and leadership potential evaluation, leading back to employee engagement.

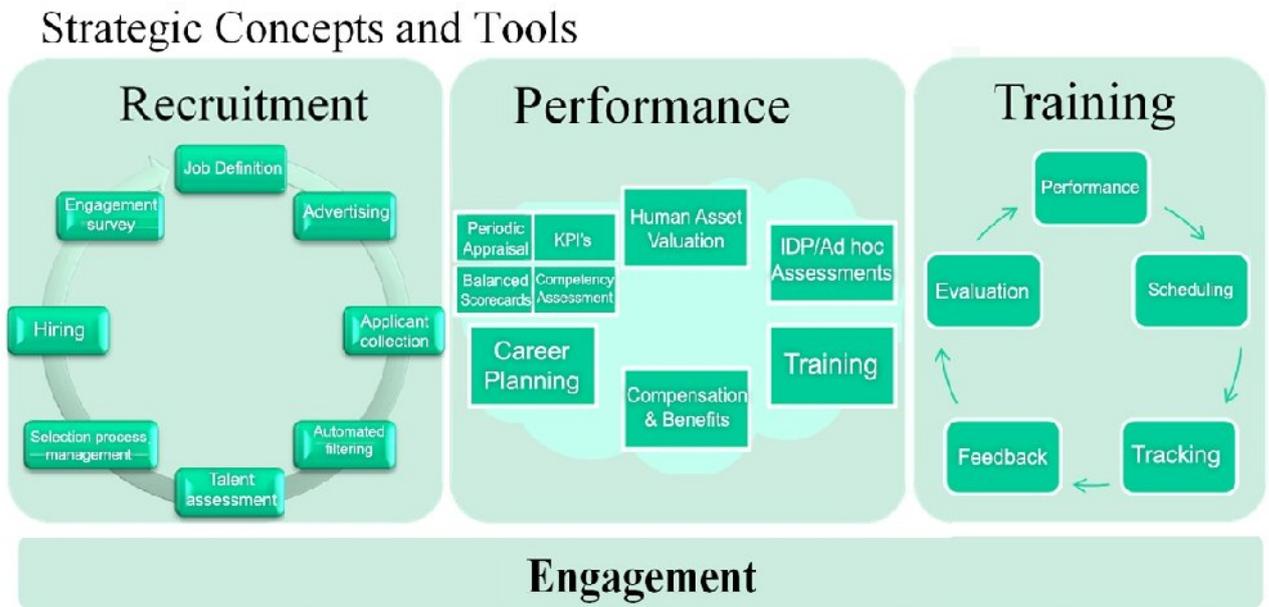


Figure 3. Strategic Concepts and Tools

These aspects in their full complexity cannot be managed properly even with the best manual paper-based system in place. It requires the adoption and implementation of new concepts, progressive tools and processes such as balanced scorecard, performance tracking, competency evaluation, talent identification and individual development plans in order to align employees with organizational visions and goals and to help the HR Department position itself as a strategic partner of the business. Herein we review the four major strategic HR areas and a technological approach to deliver results.

5. 1. Recruitment

In highlight of competition for talent, increased wages and high turnover rates, the acquisition of skilled employees has become one of the top priorities but also greatest challenges of any company. More than ever is it necessary for companies to recruit proactively by analyzing corporate goals and their relation to company wide competency requirements while predicting headcount growth patterns. However, in many companies recruitment is often a last minute process that is initiated when the need is already present. Under these circumstances companies not only tend to bypass proper analysis of employee skill requirements as well as input from multiple sources but also skip minimal processes that may be in place. This subjective rather than objective approach negates the value of strategic recruitment planning.



Figure 4. Workflow for Strategic Recruitment

It is therefore necessary to make use of available technologies that assist in systematizing the recruitment process and provide a guideline through all important recruiting steps and activities. An effective and strategically relevant recruitment process can be achieved when its cycle consists of the following functions:

- Manpower Planning: ideally, the recruitment process starts with the creation of manpower plans to predict recruiting levels and times. Manpower plans should be created based on input from department managers, staff supervisors and HR professionals. Once approved, the recruitment process can be initiated based on manpower plans but also, optionally, can occur out of other circumstances such as urgent replacement needs.
- Job Definitions and Requirements: when recruitment is initiated it is paramount to associate the vacant positions with a detailed descriptions of the task and responsibilities as well as further job specification such as competency requirements, educational background, work experience, employment type, etc.
- Advertising: once a vacancy is sufficiently described and approved for starting the hiring process it should be posted internally and externally. For the external vacancy posting, technology must allow HR professionals to keep track of different advertising sources, publishing periods and costs. An integral part of technology should be a feature that allows applicants to apply Online. In that capacity the feature should provide the facility to be interfaced with existing websites that a company might already have.
- Definition of Selection Procedures: as a parallel process to the vacancy posting, an internal plan for position selection cycle should be formulated. Depending on the hierarchical level of a position, different input from different management levels may be

required. The selection procedure plan, should therefore not only list the different types of selection activities and time frames but also allow for putting multiple people in charge of each activity.

- Applicant Data Collection: using technology means one central location in which received applicant data is available and can be stored for a desired period of time based on the company policy. As a result, this data can be used for the next recruitment process or to guard against multiple applications by a single person. Ideally, this process is combined with features that allow searching applicants based on different job or persona related criteria and to find out how well applicants are qualified for applied positions.
- Automated Filtering: when underpinning the recruitment process with technology it should come with an initial filter function. That function is very useful as it allows recruiters to remove those applicants that have not passed basic qualifications (based on a variety of review filters) to be considered as viable candidates. It saves them valuable time in processing irrelevant applications.
- Talent Assessment and Selection Process: following the shortlisting of applicants, begins the assessment of the best candidates in accordance with earlier defined selection procedures. Each person involved in the review process and tasked with the different applicant evaluation activities submits their observations. These can occur in many different forms including scoring test results, ranking of competencies and weighting, free text form comments for strength and weaknesses as well as pass or not pass recommendations, etc. Combined with a variety of analysis tools recruiters have efficient means to objectively compare, rate and sort applicants in different categories and determine the best match.
- Hiring: once a hiring decision is made, technology assist in generating automated acceptance or rejection letters to the applicants based on previously created letter templates according to company policies. Moreover, an interface with Employee Administration allows that all information gathered during the selection process is transferred to the Personnel Administration database, so that such data doesn't have to be re-entered.
- Induction: The process of bringing employees into the organization is often the first impression of the company made after the recruitment process is concluded. This process sets the stage for all future interactions with the employee and provides a baseline of knowledge for the employees understanding of their fit to the organization and what is expected of them. Automating this process to ensure strict standards are adhered to is critical in developing engaged employees with high future productivity.
- Process Control: in order to achieve ideal results, the effectiveness of recruitment process needs to be constantly analyzed and re-evaluated from different perspectives. To do so several tools are needed; starting with cost tracking, actual costs vs. budgets reports, planned hiring vs. actual vacancy fulfillment statistics, most trafficked advertising source, to engaging newly hired employees in surveys that help to gather input and perception of the recruitment process in terms of strength and areas of improvement.

5. 2. Performance

Managing performance is interpreted differently by different departments in the company. Even so, it can be generalized as the process of assessing progress toward achieving predetermined goals, whereas its main purpose is to link individual objectives with organizational objectives and ensure their achievement.

Although performance management is most likely the most strategic function of the Human Resource Department in its aim to achieve business goals while engaging, developing and retaining employees, most companies only deploy basic performance measurement techniques that do not provide a true understanding of an employee from multiple inputs and perspectives. As such potential actions to develop employees cannot be properly applied and may lead to decreased employee engagement and ultimately lower the value of an employee to the company.

Performance management must be understood as a comprehensive process of which performance measurement is only one component. Figure 5 provides a sample construct of the integrated performance management system which involves determining performance objectives based on higher level corporate objectives, developing an understanding of the required abilities to achieve these objectives, measuring the compliance of both the objectives and the required abilities, developing and incentivising employees to focus on the correct achievements and developing the organization based on the outcome of the process.

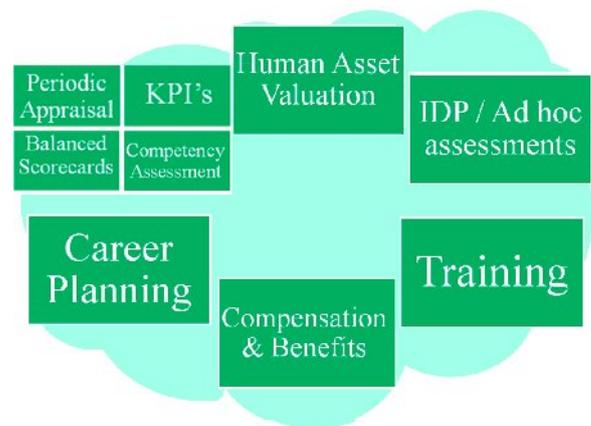


Figure 5. Workflow for Strategic Recruitment

5.2.1. Competency Management

The concept of competency management allows executives, HR managers, supervisors and employees to work together in ensuring that employees develop the skills and personality traits necessary to achieve corporate goals both current and future. Competency tracks the ability of employees to achieve these goals rather than the actual achievement giving the company greater insight into future performance and obstacles to current performance than tracking actual achievements can. This is done by measuring the hard skills related to their current and future jobs as well as soft skills such as personality, both of which will contribute to their success. The results of this measurement provides the primary input required to effectively develop talent through methods such as training, coaching and new job assignments while also allowing managers to understand obstacles to achieving performance targets and reposition employees appropriately.

To be effective, competency information tracks a large amount of data and should be automated by technology that is able to assist in the definition, tracking and analysis while providing standardization throughout the organization to ensure accurate, consistent results.

Competency management starts by defining the competencies, which will be tracked through a consultative approach between executives, HR professionals and line managers. Analyzing short and long term objectives to determine competency requirements is a complex task which should include the following:

- Define the success measures of the company and how they translate to KPIs;
- Identify those processes or tasks that are critical to achieving results;
- Design task knowledge and supervisor observation questions that clearly reflect the competence standards from a must-know and must-demonstrate perspective;
- Inventory training resources and align the right resources to the right task;
- Group processes into jobs and job families;
- Align jobs with organization units.

Note, that the utilization of a job family structure will vastly simplify this process. Job families are groupings of employees by job function rather than by traditional organizational chart divisions and departments whereas, for example, secretaries in different divisions would share the same job family in that their job functions are similar.

5.2.2. Traditional Appraisals

The traditional annual or quarterly performance appraisal form is often the first thing we think about when discussing performance management. Although a strategic approach to performance management goes far beyond the traditional performance appraisal process, periodic performance appraisals when used effectively provides an important component of the overall process and contributes to competency management.

By automating the performance appraisal process with technology, linking performance appraisals to job families and establishing new competency related questions for the performance appraisal forms their effectiveness is vastly augmented. Additionally, allowing employees to contribute to the performance appraisal process through self appraisals while opening the process to some form of the 360 degree method where peers and staff have input to the appraisal process further increases its value.

5.2.3. Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and Balanced Scorecard (BSC)

Effective performance management, as the name implies, starts with the concept of performance management, not performance measurement. With a relatively small executive management team it is difficult to effectively communicate and delegate corporate goals throughout the organization. The balanced scorecard and associated utilization of key performance indicators provide a systematic framework for the communication of corporate strategy throughout the organization by allowing goals to be broken down and assigned to all levels of the business.

Utilizing a balanced scorecard to define business objectives allows a holistic perspective of financial, customer, internal process and the learning and growth aspects of the business. In order to deploy a balanced scorecard as a performance management strategy the following methodology is useful:

1. Development of BSC strategy aligned with corporate strategy;
2. Structure strategy by selecting performance measures, establishing targets and objectives, and identifying delivery ownership;

3. Define measures for each objective for managers and employees to know if and when they are achieved;
4. Scorecard drill down - develop the scorecard at every level so that each person sees how their specific duties align with and contribute to the higher level goals;
5. Develop an implementation plan;
6. Evaluate BSC frequently;
7. Periodically re-examine to ensure the balanced scorecard still matches corporate strategy.

5.2.4 HAV as a collaborative tool

Combining the actual performance data as indicated through the balanced scorecard, KPI's and traditional performance appraisal process with competency based skill and ability data allows a comprehensive determination of each employees fit to their current job as well as providing comparative data on various employee groupings. Complex analytics to allow this, such as the human asset valuation matrix (HAV), can be automated to accumulated data provided from the multiple sources and represent this data graphically.

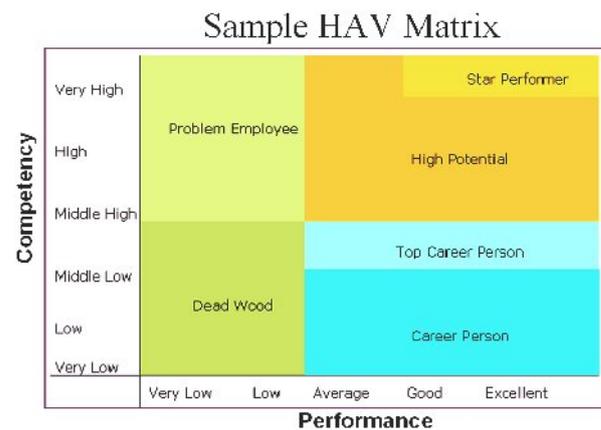


Figure 6. Human Asset Valuation Matrix Example

Executives, Managers and HR professionals are able to utilize the HAV to determine employee fit and effective talent development approaches. When digitally available, such data can also be provided directly to employees allowing them the better understand how to increase performance and achieve advancement or other rewards.

The HAV also provides a validation of the performance management methods used; where it becomes immediately apparent if the performance management objectives for skills and achievement accurately reflect corporate goals. This is visible when, for example, performance is deemed to be good, but employees are consistently ranked as low skilled or low performers allowing the determination that targets are too difficult or misaligned.

5.2.5. Individual Development Plans

Understanding that different employees require different methods of development to achieve the best results and implementing technology to help analyze development needs, collaborate on a development plan, then monitor the completion and effectiveness of the plan provides higher achievement levels for the corporation while reducing turnover and increasing employee engagement. Using the human asset valuation to determine employee development plans, collaborating between employees, managers and HR professionals in an interactive way creates a truly individual development plan.

5.2.6. Interactive Career (Path) Planning

Career advancement is often the highest priority of employees, concurrently, companies constanly complain of losing valuable staff as they job hop to advance their career.

However, companies are often forced to look outside their existing employees to fill positions as employees don't possess the best match of skills for a vacant position or aren't deemed to be performing well enough to warrant promotion. By actively collaborating with employees on their career plan and making requirements transparent well in advance employees can be encouraged to develop the credibility to fit these positions as they become available. Putting in place an interactive method of career planning which allows employees to view career advancement options and determine the related requirements encourages talent to be readily available as needed while enhancing employee engagement.

5.3. Training

Training is part of any talent management strategy with substantial amounts being invested each year in both internal and external training aimed at providing a more skilled workforce. Despite that training is more often than not a static process that does not appropriately take into consideration corporate goals or is reactive to changes in strategy or people. Combined with budget limitations and missing tools to evaluate training effectiveness it is difficult for HR Managers to know that the time and money spent on training programs actually contributes to employees' development prospects as well as more corporate value. It is clear that HRD must change its approach to a proactive one which relates training programs to corporate goals, individual development targets based on appraisals, competency gaps and other HR functions in order for training to be effective and beneficial for both the employees as well as the company.

In order to develop an effective and strategic training management, HRD must thoroughly understand and then define job family competency requirements. Once defined, strategic tools including appraisals, performance evaluation, human asset value matrices assist in identifying employees' competency gaps against current positions, potential development opportunities and their own career path preferences. Effective training can then be achieved when the planning and scheduling of programs is done in conjunction with meeting corporate objectives (through closing identified gaps) but also respects employee development plans. Multiple training methods including internal training, external training and eLearning must be deployed to fit different employees' training needs. Moreover, it must be allowed that supervisors, managers and employees have an opportunity to evaluate training programs through post training surveys and feedback in order to ensure their effectiveness towards objectives achievement and benefit.

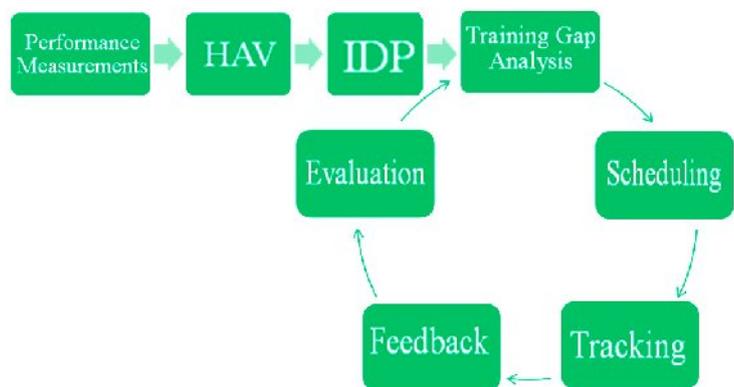


Figure 7. Effective Training Management Cycle

As the structures of training management can become very complex, technology can help automating the process by linking job families, competency requirements, training programs and the usage of various performance management aspects to analyze gaps and development areas. Integrated technology provides the benefit of suggesting certain training programs that are needed to close gaps or advance an employee in respect of their own development paths wishes. In addition to very fundamental features to provide

effective training management structures, technology allows detailed tracking of courses, participation, session scheduling, training budgeting, as well as actual vs. planned expense comparisons. The automatic effect of stored final training results on updating employees competencies and skills enables HRD to analyze the benefit of different training methods in regards of investment vs. competency improvement.

5. 4. Engagement

As the business moves from improving administration to a strategic HR focus, so must it move from the concept of employee satisfaction to the concept of employee engagement. While a low level of employee satisfaction will result in high turnover and a devastating effect of morality on productivity, very high levels of satisfaction don't tend to have associated levels of impact on productivity. Employee engagement focuses on having employees fully involved and enthusiastic about their work, rather than ensuring that employees are satisfied by their current job. Primary indicators of engagement include perception of job importance, clarity of expectations, career advancement opportunities, regular feedback, perception of organization values and other factors. The strategic HR management methods discussed herein are those which directly target these indicators and are intended to result in engaged employees that:

- Are more motivated to organizational goals and confident in their actions;
- Develop and share innovative ideas;
- Produce higher levels of customer approval and service quality;
- Are more productive;
- Have lower absenteeism;
- Are more reliable, possess deeper organizational loyalty and contribute to lower employee turnover.

6. Leverage Technology

The concepts presented herein represent ideas that are, today, at the forefront of most HR professionals thinking on how to provide a deep, strategic business contribution. Complexity of implementation and inability to measure impact often prevents the executive management from promoting these concepts. However, new technology, especially software allows these concepts to be implemented in a cost effective way and to clearly measure results.

Utilizing web based software to manage HR allows the transitioning of HR tasks from the HR department to the entire organization, thereby gaining effectiveness and allowing a standardization of the approach which was not previously possible within existing HR budgets.

As the changes discussed herein are both far reaching and complex, it is important to implement technology that allows changes to be applied in a consistent way over time. As explained in the background above, an HR management methodology must develop through several levels where each level depends on the preceding level performing efficiently. As such, it is critical that the implemented technology support this process by being flexible to business requirements and allowing increasingly complex strategy to be applied over a period of years.

Additionally, the software implemented should be able to support variance in business operations through complex options. Although software may provide a good standard, or best practice based method of operation, it is important that the software also maintains the flexibility to adapt to business process or specific functional requirements as they arise. The flexibility of the software becomes increasingly important as the business moves from the administrative to more complex strategic HR functionality in that these strategic functions are primarily where the business differentiates itself and establishes its competitive advantage

7. Summary

Transitioning HRM from an administrative to strategic role provides both short and long term benefits making this process an important goal of a successful companies' integrated strategic plan. This process requires a standardization and automation of administrative tasks and a lengthy roll out of increasingly complex HR management concepts which span the entire organization and affect all levels of employees. Utilizing software allows this process to occur effectively and ensures short term improvements are translated to long term competitive advantage.

Creating a transparent framework which allows employees to understand their contribution to organizational goals and to gain career advancement though this process improves the level of engagement, ultimately establishing a more productive workforce.

Understanding that each company and their employees have different goals and taking a methodical approach to achieving those goals creates sustainable competitive advantage that stabilizes the business through a challenging global economic situation and lays the framework for the company to emerge as a market leader.

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