

Staff selection, training and development in the 21st century

Human resource management as problem prevention

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- “Human resource management (HRM) ...
 - ... is too expensive”
 - ... is too soft”

Are these perceptions true?

First: Does HRM matter?

- Scientific evidence
 - Seminal study by Huselid (1995)
 - 968 American companies
 - A measure of HRM practices
 - Several performance criteria
 - Result: correlations of around $r = .20$
 - Meta-analysis by Rabl et al. (2014)
 - Meta-analysis = statistical combination of primary studies
 - Here: 156 studies
 - Result: $r = .22$

4 Examples

- Staff selection
- Onboarding
- Team development
- Leader training

- Typical statements
 - “It has always worked this way”
 - “You can trust my gut feeling”

Scientific recommendations regarding selection (e.g., Cook, 2016)

- A careful analysis of the job and its requirements
 - Have you considered all relevant tasks?
- Targeted recruitment
 - Reach out to the groups that you think should apply
- Standardization
 - Allows comparisons
- An mental abilities test
 - Having a quick mind will always be helpful
- An assessment of applicants' values and interests
 - The right motives for applying?
 - Should job security be the main motive?

Why is staff selection so important?

- Some characteristics are difficult to change
- Firing employees should be the last resort
 - Stressful experience (e.g., Brockner et al., 1987; Grunberg et al., 2006)
 - For the fired person
 - For her/his colleagues
 - For the firing manager
 - Often legally difficult anyway

→ Prevent that the wrong people enter jobs

- Common statements
 - “They will learn it on the job”
 - “I’ll explain this to you later when I have time”

Why is onboarding so important?

- Study by Farnese et al. (2016) with 117 Italian correctional police officer newcomers
 - Question: Does the support of a mentor matter?
 - Answers:
 - Yes, directly: The better the mentor support, the less turnover intentions
 - Yes, indirectly: Even if standard organizational socialization procedures for newcomers were not perfect, having a supportive mentor buffered this effect

→ Prevent that the onboarding goes wrong

- Typical situation for a psychologist:
 - Conflict has escalated
 - “Can you help?”
 - Often, I can’t anymore...
- Team interventions (e.g., Salas et al., 2008)
 - Team training
 - e.g., team building exercises
 - Doesn’t have to be outdoor training...

Why is team development so important?

- Much research showing the importance of well-functioning teams for organizational success
 - Do we have shared mental models?
 - Do we engage in backup behavior?
- Team building is much easier than conflict de-escalation

→ Prevent differences between team members becoming too impactful

- Example: stress awareness training
- Common statements among leaders
 - “Others have stress but stress doesn’t matter for me”
 - “They shouldn’t make a fuss about being stressed”
 - “I have organized my group well so my people shouldn’t complain”

Why is stress awareness training so important?

- Much evidence that working as correctional or probation officers or in related jobs is stressful (e.g., Schaufeli & Peeters, 2000; Finney et al., 2013)
 - Role problems
 - Control vs. support
 - Emotional labor (particularly demanding social contacts)
 - Work overload
 - Consequences
 - Burnout
 - Absenteeism
 - Work-family conflict

Why is stress awareness training so important? (II)

- Leaders' behavior influence team members' well-being substantially (e.g., Schyns & Schilling, 2013)
 - Maybe a task for leaders: to help their members to detach from work

→ Prevent stress becoming too impactful

Back to perceptions of HRM

- Human resource management (HRM) ...
 - ... does indeed require investments
 - Investments that will pay out only in the distant future
 - ... has indeed only probable outcomes
- Nevertheless, good, preventive HRM is now needed more than ever!
- HRM needs your support!

Thank you for your attention

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