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### **THE ACTIVITIES OF HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT**

Intense competition pressures organizations to carefully examine their costs and to exploit every possible source of competitive advantage. Edward Lawler, a prominent management author and consultant, states, "All staff departments are being asked to justify their cost structures on a competitive basis ... head-count comparisons are being made by corporations to check the ratio of employees to members of the Human Resource department"[3]. Whether the organization is facing increasing international competition or simply more intense pressure to improve the bottom line, Human Resource has a great opportunity to meet new and old challenges as a business partner. Lawler sees the most pressing need in the area of corporate strategy. "The Human Resource function must become a partner in developing an organization's strategic plan, for human resources are a key consideration in determining strategies that are both practical and feasible This Human Resource partnership must evolve out of the major activities of the Human Resource function[3]. So what are the major activities and how do they relate to contemporary trends in the business environment?

The Human Resource Management activities fall under eight major human resource policy domains: organizational design, staffing, employee and organizational development, performance appraisal and management reward systems and benefits, productivity improvement, employee/employer relationships, including labor relations, health and safety[2].

Organizational design involves the arrangement of work tasks based on the interaction of people, technology, and the tasks to be performed in the context of the

mission, goals, and strategic plan of the organization. Human Resource Management activities such as human resources planning, job analysis, organizational restructuring, job design, computerization, and worker-machine interfaces are under this policy area. Corporate downsizing efforts often begin with human resource planning in the context of a strategic plan and a critical analysis of how products or services could be delivered more efficiently[5].

After the organization is structured and jobs are clearly defined in terms of the necessary knowledge, skills, and abilities, positions must be staffed. Staffing has to do with the flow of people into, through, and out of the organization. Recruitment, employee orientation, staffing, promotion, and outplacement, which assistance for terminated employees, are among the functions that fit into this domain. Of all the Human Resource domains, staffing is probably the one most likely affected by litigation[3].

Employee training and organizational development programs are concerned with establishing, fostering, and maintaining employee skills based on organizational and employee needs. Developmental activities may include specialized training, career development plans, self-directed learning, and retirement program.

Performance appraisal and management activities include assessments of individual, unit, or other levels of performance to measure and improve, work performance. This domain includes employee discipline. A lawsuit can occur if the organization maintains that an employee was terminated, not promoted, or not given a merit raise because of performance and the employee believes that negative personnel action was because of his or her gender, race age, disability, or some other characteristic. An employee can also claim an unlawful discharge based on an alleged contract or implied contract violation. Obviously, merit pay systems require accurate measures of employee performance[1].

Reward systems and benefits have to do with any type of reward or benefit available to employees. Direct and indirect compensation, merit pay, profit sharing health care, parental leave programs, vacation leave, and pensions are among the

critical areas within this domain. The activities also include domestic and international compliance requirements from local, state, and federal agencies.

Productivity improvement programs have become a major emphasis of Human Resource activity as companies put sue a variety of different programs designed to increase effectiveness and efficiency.

The employee/employer relationships domain concerns labor relations law and compliance and procedures designed to maintain good working relationships between employees and employers. A critical part of Human Resource Management is the establishment and maintenance of a good working relationship with employees. Communications is an important component of this domain. This domain includes the negotiation of collective bargaining agreements, which require employers to negotiate with unionized workers over the conditions of employment[2].

The final domain is employee health and safety and includes compliance with a number of laws and regulations concerned with the work environment and its effect on workers and the general public. All these domains are concerned with sharing information among employees, management, and outside constituents, including customers. Information systems, personnel research, attitude surveys, and company publications are all included here. The manner in which the organization treats its employees, pays its executives, outsources work and to whom, promotes workforce diversity, and uses its workers can affect customer satisfaction and is thus an important Human Resource activity [4].

#### **Literature:**

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