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MGMT 640.01: Human Resource Management

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Mgt. 640: Human Resource Management
Fall Semester 2002: 6:10-9:00 p.m.
(Missoula, Kalispell, Butte, Billings)
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Course Overview and Framework

Of the many varied factors cited as contributing to the effectiveness of modern organizations, the human element (human capital) is clearly the most critical. Regardless of the size or nature of an organization, the activities it undertakes and the environment in which it operates, its success is determined by the decisions its employees make and their behaviors, particularly as they affect customers.

Managers are becoming much more cognizant of the fact that a critical source of competitive advantage often comes not from having the most ingenious product design or service, the best marketing strategy, the most state-of-the-art technology, or the most savvy financial management, *but from having the appropriate systems for attracting, motivating and managing the organization's people.*

The function of managing people was traditionally considered just that--a separate functional area, usually called "personnel." *The contemporary perspective, and one that we will emphasize in this course, is that all managers and supervisors, regardless of the function in which they specialize, are human resource managers. Furthermore, no manager can expect to advance within his or her organization and career unless he or she can effectively manage people toward meeting divisional and organizational goals.*

Despite the fact that managers in many organizations recognize the importance of effective people management, managing an organization's human assets is often one of the most neglected functions in organizations. Many technical specialists lack the training and skills to handle human issues while others are swamped with technical matters, leaving them little time to devote to people issues.

Mgmt. 640, Human Resource Management, will revolve around two themes: 1) how to think systematically and **strategically** about managing an organization's human assets, and 2) how the management of human assets can provide an organization with a distinct competitive advantage in the marketplace.

This course is not intended to turn you into HR practitioners or experts on the technical aspects of HR. We are taking a general management perspective toward the management of human resources and therefore will cover the main content areas of HR but not get into

highly technical areas of concern to human resource professionals (such as psychometric dimensions of test validation, the specifics of job evaluation methods, or the detailed aspects of job grading or classification).

Instead, we will explicitly adopt the perspective of the general manager and address human resource topics from a strategic perspective. When we discuss topics such as selection, performance appraisal, training and compensation, our perspective will be twofold:

- How choices in these areas relate to the organization's strategic objectives and can impact company performance and
- The role that you as a manager can/should play in implementing *effective* HR systems and processes in your organization

Course Goals and Objectives

1. To provide you with an understanding of key human resource practices in today's organizations and how human resource management "fits" with other functional areas and corporate strategy.
2. To help you build critical thinking skills by analyzing how human resource practices can (and must!) support an organization's strategic objectives and enhance long-term financial performance.
3. To help you understand the manager's role in an organization's human resource arsenal
4. To help you gain insights into how to manage people more effectively in a variety of organizational settings and situations
5. To help you apply your understanding of human resource practices to your own job and career planning.
6. To develop your skills in problem solving and analysis, written and oral communication, and teamwork.

Course Materials

1. Textbook: DeNisi, A.S., & Griffin, R.W. 2001. Human Resource Management. New York: Houghton Mifflin. NOTE: You are expected to *read all* of the material assigned for each week including everything in the chapter! You are expected to come to class prepared to discuss cases, vignettes, exercises, and discussion questions at the end of each chapter.
2. Additional reading: You are expected to regularly read business periodicals and newspapers and pay attention to issues that relate to the topics we are discussing. (Example: if there are headlines about major layoffs, living wage issues, strikes or labor negotiations, discrimination lawsuits, etc., tune in, bring information to class to share.)
3. Human Resource Management in the Fast Company Age; 2001: Houghton Mifflin
4. The Houghton Mifflin Guide to the Enron Crisis; 2003: Houghton Mifflin

Expectations:

You are expected to attend all classes unless there are very extenuating circumstances, which I would appreciate knowing about BEFORE you miss the class. You are expected to come prepared, having read the assigned material or having completed an assignment due that evening. Whether you have an assignment to present in class or not, I expect regular and meaningful class participation all the time. That's what helps to make this long-distance learning work!

SCHEDULE, TOPICS AND ASSIGNMENTS

- 9/3 Introduction to class; The Nature of Human Resource Management
Chapter 1 (chapter assignments including not just the written text but any and all cases and ethical dilemmas in that chapter)
- 9/10 The Strategic HR Environment: Strategic HR; the Legal Environment
Chapter 2, 3, 4
- 9/17 The Legal Environment continued; the Global Environment
Chapters 3, 4
- 9/24 Staffing the Organization: HR Planning, Recruitment and Selection
Chapters 5, 6, 7
- 10/1 Enhancing Motivation and Performance: Performance Management
Chapter 8 and Chapter 15 section on Job Design in the Workplace
- 10/8 Training, Development, and Organizational Learning
Chapters 9, 10
Assignment due: Fortune 100 Best Companies to Work For
- 10/15 Compensating and Rewarding the Workforce
Chapters 11, 12, 13
- 10/22 Managing the Workforce
Chapters 15, 16
- 10/29 Managing the Workforce continued
Chapter 14,17
- 11/5 No class: Election Day
- 11/12 Enron Case and Fast Company Article Discussions
Final exam due

Required Assignments:

1. 100 Best Companies to Work For: 100 points

Every year, Fortune Magazine reports on the top 100 best companies to work for. You can find the list on the web or in the actual magazine article. Choose two (2) companies that are very different from each other and read about them. Compare and contrast them in terms of HR practices, culture, mission, etc. What are their keys to success? In other words, how did they get on the list? How would you describe their “people” strategy? What is the “latest” on them (any scandals, problems financially, a merger or acquisition, etc.)? Basically present a case analysis on why these two companies made the list and what about their HR practices seems to be working well.

Due Date: October 8

What is required: a well-written paper (5-10 pages). Discussion in class.

2. Auditing an HR function: 50 points

Choose a single HR function (e.g., selection, performance appraisal, succession planning, benefits administration) in your organization (or one where you have recently worked if you aren’t currently working). Describe how the function operates in your organization: is it done “strategically” (defend your answer); is it a high performance work system (how do you know? What are the deliverables? What are the behaviors employees exhibit that show whether it is or isn’t or what does the organization’s performance tell you about the function and how it is working?) Is it aligned with business strategy and with “other” HR functions? How would you improve it, or if it is so good, why? How has it changed or evolved over time with the organization’s changes? How does it compare to others in your industry?

Due Date: when that particular topic is discussed in class.

What is required: a well-written paper (about 5 pages). Oral executive summary in class the night we discuss your topic. You tell me ahead of time what your topic is and I will make time during that evening’s class for your 10 minutes.

3. Optional Projects: 50 points each (100 total)

Select two optional projects.

Due Date: due in class BEFORE the day we discuss that topic. YOUR class participation is a MUST that day in order to get full credit for the assignment. I need to know before class if you are “on tap” that night so I can arrange for time for you to share your information.

What is required: see the details of the assignment. Tell what you learned and contribute to our class discussion.

Option A: Discrimination Issues: Due 9/17

There are number of legal and other web sites (including the OFCCP and the EEOC) that provide updates and examples of current discrimination complaints or lawsuits. Find two that are pending or that have been recently heard in a court.

What are the issues in these cases? How do the cases differ or compare? Describe the potential implications for managers and HR people depending on the resolution. Why did those particular cases/issues interest you?

Option B: Recruitment/Selection

Due 9/24

Select 2 (two) actual ads for vacant positions (more than just a box ad in the local paper.) You can use professional journals, Monster.com, etc., or newspapers (hard copy or on-line) or any other posting (some professional organizations have newsletters or bulletin boards). Pick two ads for similar jobs/positions (e.g., 2 accounting positions, 2 management positions, 2 marketing or sales positions, etc.). Evaluate the ads. Rewrite the more ineffective or the two (or if they are both so good, tell me why you aren't rewriting anything about them.)

Option C: Job Design

Due 10/1

p. 471 in the text

Option D: Benefits

Due 10/15

Interview one person who has worked 5 years or fewer for an organization; interview a person who has worked there more than 5 and ideally, 10 years or more. (Good luck!) What benefits/incentives are most important to each person? What is least important? Why? What about yourself? If there are differences among the 3 of you, analyze why. How can an organization respond to all 3 of your needs? How would you change/improve the benefit/incentive that is least important to give it greater value?

Option E: Policies

Due 10/22

Pick 2 policies you think your organization needs, either brand new ones or revised existing policies. Tell me why (not just because the text says so) you chose to write those policies and why they are needed. Why did you select those two out of a myriad of possible policies? Write the policy (you probably shouldn't just write it off the top of your head but do some research) and then explain why you wrote it the way you did.... what did you consider when you wrote it and what did you not include and why? Write these as though you were the HR person (or a task force assigned the task) having to defend these new policies to your executives or a group of organizational managers and employees.

Option F: Labor Relations

Due 10/29

Identify a strike or labor dispute, either one that was settled or is still pending, that occurred within the past 18 months. What were/are the issues? How did employee relations escalate to a strike, mediation or arbitration, major news headlines, bankruptcy, etc.? Did other organizations in the industry avoid problems or did they have similar labor disputes? How is the organization dealing with the dispute now and how are they performing financially?

4. Final Exam:

100 points

Read the *Fast Company* articles and the Enron Crisis Cases. In your answers to the exam questions, I will expect you to be able to tie in the articles/cases materials with discussion in class, including material from the text. The questions will be available the week before the final is due and more information about my expectations will follow.

Due Date: 11/12

What is expected: written answers to questions and participation in class discussion

This is a graduate level class; therefore, I have high expectations of your writing and the quality of your final products in all these assignments.