

Hrm issues in british airways

[Environment](#), [Air](#)



Human resource management is important for organizations that aspire for the best out of its workforce. Employees in any organization do not have the same qualities and therefore there should be a good framework that recognizes this diversity and utilize it to the advantage of the company.

British Airways is one of the largest airlines in Europe; since its inception in 1919 the British Airways has grown to be the world class airline. Each decade, the airline has experienced growth and challenges; these challenges have helped to revolutionize the airline to its current status. In 1977 the airline carried out important reorganization in its management system which brought all of its operations into a 'single functional base'; different departments were created which were also given different responsibilities.

More to this point, flight operation department which oversee the execution of all flights arranged, was created; departments dealing with commercial operations were split according to the 'geographical route group'; and planning and engineering department was created to oversee the management of the airplanes and planning of flights. These were some of the changes that the airline deed to improve its operations. Today, the company operates so many businesses ranging from travel, holidays bookings services to providing shopping services to its clients. To this extend it is arguably clear that the development and success of British Airways is credited to the selfless effort of its staff. This can only be experienced when a good management structure of human resource in place. Human resource management means utilization and management of staff effectively (Ekerman 2006, p. 4). There are two key elements of human resource management: organizational behavior and Organizational development.

Organizational Behavior

Organizational Behavior is fundamental tool for human resource management. Kaila (2005) asserted that organizational behavior is a powerful tool that contributes to the success of company's business. This tool is currently taking control of many organizations in the world. Kaila (2005, p. 350) gave several definitions of Organizational behavior; one of his definition was that organizational behavior is a study of human behavior within organization and the use of this knowledge to benefit people. It can also be defined as understanding, predicting and controlling of human behavior in a company (p. 350). Organizational behavior is based on several fundamental factors: ' Globalization, employees' diversity, Changed Worker perception and expectation, empowering employees, enhancing quality and output, inspiring innovation and transformation, Company Reorganization, and enhancing moral behavior (p. 352).

Globalization

Globalization of businesses has greatly affected human resource management. The human resource management is compelled to adapt to the new laws and observe them to the latter; they are also required to adapt with new languages and fierce competition in global market; there are also new management styles and new business ethics. In respect to this, the role of personnel, recruiting and training of employees, compensation, retention of employees, retrenching of staff, needs a global outlook. For an organization to persist and be successful in such environment it requires such company to be dynamic and proactive. More to this point, an organization can only achieve this if and only if it has best staff in place.

Globalization poses several challenges to many organizations: due to advance technology involved, it requires organizations to employ competent and talented staff; secondly, it compels organizations to work as a team focusing on one mission; thirdly, it needs a large number of staff and experts (Kaila 2005, p. 352). Similarly, globalization affects managers in a very big way. For example, in a situation where managers are needed to perform duties in foreign nations or perhaps they have been posted to work in different nations, they face very tough challenges; they are supposed to supervise staffs who are likely to be totally different from those they have been managing at home. Moreover, what excites them may not excite the new staff; therefore adapting to this may prove to be very difficult for the managers. Faced with such situations, organizational behavior is fundamental for it describes clearly how managers can work with such employees successfully. Organizational behavior gives a clear perspective on how to approach such environment successfully, inspite of the diverse management style that the manager has (p. 353).

Employees' Diversity

The greatest challenge facing many companies today is adjusting to employees' who have diverse backgrounds. Organizational behavior recognizes this diversity of people and gives solution to it. One methods of addressing culture diversity is: 'melting pot conception,' the diversity between people is 'homogenized' and each person is left to adapt to their diverse cultural background in the course of time (Kaila 2005, p. 356).

Changed Worker Perception and Expectation

Employees are expected to put more effort in their work, they are charged with the duty to expand productivity of the company. The organization also requires them to commit themselves to the mission of the company, participate actively in making proposal and innovations to the company. According to Silzer and Dowell (2010, p. 446) organizations expect each worker to contribute in attaining the organizations objectives and help in making key decisions of the company using their knowledge and skills. The organization also believes that the workers have the ability and zeal to attain the goal set by the organization and therefore it advocates on adhering to the workers development programmes.

Enhancing Skill and Empowering Employees'

Human resource management strategy in most companies, insists on molding peoples skills and talents through training programmes organized by the company. Besides, they also take initiatives of empowering staff- allowing staff to be in-charge of what they have initiated-in the work place (Kaila 2005, p. 356). As the junior staff takes charge of their roles, the supervisors loose their jobs; since they will no longer be needed the organization lay them off. Silzer and Dowell (2010, p. 3) insist that organizations should invest in taping talents who will contribute in making strategic decisions of the company about where to invest their finances, how to renovate the existing products in the market and compete effectively, and finally how to reorient resources and achieve the desired targets.

Supporting Staff Balance Their Job/Life Concept

Employees spend a lot of time in their work place at the expense of their families. Most of the time they have to work for very long hours and therefore left with very short time or even no time at all to be with their families. Needless to say, the employee's family breakup and as a result loses morale in work place. In respect to this, organizations are providing free services such as child care: organizations hires staffs whose duty is to take care of the babies of the workers at work place; hence, employees can mingle with their loved ones during their free time in the job place (Silzer and Dowell 2010, p. 732). Besides, employees are also rewarded for their time and services they have rendered to the company or either they are allowed to work in a flexible time schedule that can be convenient for them. These approaches have very positive impact to effective human resource management. Basically, it make employees feel valued and hence retain them, it also motivates and make them comfortable in the work place since they can spend time with their children and therefore have not fear about their safety.

Company Reorganization

Many companies are merging with others; they are also acquiring and taking-over other firms to increase their strength and market share.

However, this reorganization has resulted into negative and positive impact to the organization and the employees at large. For example take-over may result into loss of jobs or employees being transferred into other locations which may not conform to their will. In other occasions, it may result into change in salary-reduce or may increase-and worse still the organization

may lose its identity wholly (Kaila 2005, p. 360). The human resource managers should take initiative and put in place mechanism that can help employees and the company adapt to these changes.

Enhancing Quality and Output

Quality and output is very important in organizational behavior. In a world of competition, quality is very crucial. Companies therefore, are employing total quality management strategy which articulates that all employees observe quality in all products and services they are offering. As part of their improvement changes to their services and products, British Airways introduced total quality management; this improved their services and products and in 1992, British Airways was viewed as one of the best companies in Europe (Lundy & Cowling 1996, p. 358).

Enhancing Moral Behavior

Organizations that observe good ethics in their working improves their reputation and will attract many customers. It is the duty of management to make sure that their employees conduct themselves in good manner all times. Surprisingly, organizations have their own methods of enforcing good ethics in their staff: most of the organizations have set of rules concerning how employees should conduct themselves in the course of their duties. Other organizations have developed training programmes and seminars to create awareness on ethical behavior to their staff (Lundy & Cowling 1996, p. 363).

Inspiring Innovation and Transformation

Organizations have put in place mechanisms to enhance innovation and change their products and services. They reward innovative ideas from employees and assign them a role to manage and lead the organization in implementing fully their innovation. For example, British Airways offer training programmes to their employees which is intended to improve their knowledge and skills and therefore maximizing their potential.

Organizational Development

An organizational development engages with application of programmes which have been structured to improve the effectiveness of a company and how it reacts to change. According to Armstrong (2006, p. 338), 'organizational development is concerned with process, not structure or system with the way things are done rather than what is done'.

Organizational development articulates method for tackling changing processes in an organization. Examples of these changing processes are behavioral change, cultural change and most importantly changes brought by globalization.

Team Building

Team-building in an organization is directed to improve the performance and effectiveness of workers in a group. The improvement is measured based on the outputs of the group. It takes into consideration the length of time by which a group take to make decision and also the quality of such decision. Many organizations nowadays focuses on team-building because it has proofed to be productive. British airways have built teams of staff that runs

its operations in all of its subsidiaries. Team-building basically is aimed at developing interaction that will facilitate employees to work effectively as a group (Armstrong 2006, p. 355). Additionally, it is used to improve the way teams perform their work and as a result improving their effectiveness. Team-building is done through training programmes which is organized by the company. Effective team-building training should be designed to correspond with the task and responsibilities of the team. Armstrong (2006, p. 356) suggests that team-building programme should be designed to sustain the objectives and mission of the business.

Total Quality Management

This programme is very important to the success and future of a company. It is intended to create, develop and maintain high quality of products and services produced by the organization. It alerts the staff to observing quality in all the kind of work they do. In 1986 British Airways implemented total quality strategy as one of the organizational development strategy (Lundy & Cowling 1996, p. 356).

Continuous Improvement

Continuous improvement articulates that work can be done in a better way (Armstrong 2006, p. 356). This approach advocates for continuous innovations that are beneficial to the organization. Continuous improvement is a tool that can be used to tap innovations and use it to the benefit of the organization.

Performance Management

This is one of the best approaches for enhancing companies' effectiveness.

Performance management is a process whereby a worker and a human resource manager communicate and agree how they are going to work together to attain the objectives of the business (Bacal 1999, p. 3). The communication process between the human resource manager and the employee should be a continuous process and the manager should explain clearly to the worker his role and duties and what he is expected of him/her; should also explain to the worker how his role contributes to the mission of the organization.

Management Theories

There are three types of management theories that are fundamental in human resource management. These theories are: organizational theory, motivational theory and leadership theories (the path-goal theory).

Motivational Theory

Motivational theory has existed for a long period of time-since twentieth century (Crowther & Green 2004, p. 38). The main theme of this theory is that: organizations can only attain its goals if they take the ' hearts and minds' of their employees along with them (p. 38). The theory was developed during the time when companies were expanding and the system of managing workforce that was in place was not effective, so managers were devising new ways of managing the employees and increasing productivity. Actually, human resource management has borrowed its ideas from the motivational theory. The theory explains that controlling the

employee may not really lead to productivity. It articulates that employees can only work effectively if there is a reward and punishment at the end of it. Crowther & Green (2004) asserts that employees would be motivated by bigger ambitions if they have achieved little ones (39).

Organizational Theory

Organisational theory is the modern management theory. The theory is stated as the ability of a person to organize himself, manage his employees and workmates (Mernagh-Ward & Cartwright 1997, p. 110). This theory helps an organization to describe their past clearly; it also make them foresee the future; and finally, by knowing the future they are able to control what is in the future and as a result minimizing the consequences of misfortunes. Generally, there are certain things that all human beings always want to satisfy in their lives: first, people always want to be contented with themselves; secondly, they want to be respected by other people: thirdly, they want to feel important to other people; the fourth point is, they want to be protected; and last but not list, they want basic needs (p. 110).

Leadership Theory (The Path-Goal Theory)

This theory was created by Robert House (Erasmus, Swanepoel & Schenk 2009). The path-goal theory guide leaders on how to supervise work by demonstrating how performance of an individual contributes to attaining the needed goals. Basically, it articulates what leaders are supposed to do. In line with this, leaders should influence the way employees perceive their work; they should guide, and reward their employees; and advice them on the ways of attaining their goals. There are four types of leadership that

exist: Directive, supportive, achievement-oriented and participative leadership. Directive leadership give directions to employees, supportive leadership provide support to people, participative leadership consults staff before making any decision, while achievement oriented strive to improve performance of the organization.

International Human Resource Management

Human resource management practices exist in the international basis.

Multinational companies such as British airways, Deloitte, KPMG and so many others practice international human resource management. International human resource management is a mechanism of recruiting, building and rewarding staff in the global companies (Armstrong 2006, p. 99). Global companies or international companies represents those firms which have subsidiary companies in other nations and they depend entirely on the parent company. A good example is the British Airways which offers flight services all over the globe. The Airline runs affiliate programmes through other networks in the nations they operate. The airline operates in 13 countries in Asia pacific, Europe and United Kingdom.

British airways since its inception has undergone organizational restructuring to be where it is now. They have good structure of human resource management which attracts and retain employees. In the early stages of its development the company devolved the administrative roles to line managers and therefore reduced the number of administrators in the departments. The staffs were also enrolled on training whereby, they were taught on putting customers as first priority (Lundy & Cowling 1996, p. 356).

The most important and progressive step that was taken by the company was the initiation of performance pay. Subsequently, the company implemented total quality management and continued with training which managed to quell cultural change that was taking shape in the organization.

Impacts of HRM Practices to Organizations

Human resource management practices in many organizations have contributed to the improvement and performance of those organizations. It is arguable that the success of large organizations such as British Airways, Microsoft, Deloitte and Pricewaterhousecoopers is attributed to good structures of human resource management that are used. British Airways came to existence through merger of two airlines-British European Airways (BEA) and British Overseas Airways Corporation (BOAC) – in 1974 (Lundy & Cowling 1996, p. 353). The aim of the merger was to build a worldwide network and benefit from economies of scale. The anticipated outcomes were not achieved, infact the organization experienced a serious management challenges. The airline had about Fifty thousand employees and two hundred and fifteen aircraft with a bureaucratic structure of management. Besides, the cultural diversity of the two merging airlines caused so many problems to the new airline. They were loosing so many customers to other airlines; it was revealed that during that period about '33 percent of the customers wanted to avoid British Airways at all cost' (Lundy & Cowling 1996, p. 353).

British Airways had to immediately implement several human resource management practices to compete effectively in the market. First, to remove

completely the bureaucratic structure of management which existed in the organization, British Airways employed new top management staff with good management qualities that matched the need of the company and consequently, devolved all the administrative roles to line managers. The departments were also streamlined to retain only few employees with higher standards of consultants. As a result of these changes, the company's management structure become more flexible and was able delivered services to customers more effectively and efficiently.

Second the organization organized trainings for its staff on customer treatment. They trained the staff on putting customer as the first priority in all their workings in the company. In addition, employees were also trained on how to communicate with the customers. The aim of this training was to improve the public image of the company and change the attitude of employees toward customers while upholding high standards of customer care. Eventually, the company was able to improve its reputation and won back customers confidences (Lundy & Cowling 1996, p. 358). More to this point, the intensive training of staff on communication, helped greatly to minimize the cultural change that was introduced by merging of the two companies. (p. 358). Third point, performance pay system was adopted and employees were rated according to their performance in their roles in the organization; high performing employees were rewarded and retained. This system managed to put all the employees including managers to task, and every staff was competing to be the top performer. Today, British Airways is one of the most reputable companies in the world, with the best and highest number of personnel.

Another company that achieved a lot from employing human resource management practices is Rover Company. The company adopted total quality management programme in all of its operations. All employees including senior managers were trained on observing total quality in their duties. It is estimated that about 3, 300 managers and 40, 000 junior staff were taken through training in Total Quality Management (Lundy & Cowling 1996, p. 363). Besides, the employees were put into teams lead by team leaders. These changes improved tremendously the performance of the Rover Company; they produced quality cars which attracted so many customers. Rover annual productivity rose by thirty four percent per each worker (Lundy & Cowling 1996, p. 361) in 1993; 86. 4 hours was enough for a single man to manufacture one Land Rover.

Conclusion

In conclusion the human resource management is very important in any organization that strives for a better future. Organizations that are having good human resource management practices are able to effectively attract and retain talented employees, develop innovations and surpass other organizations in the market. Essential, elements of human resource management are organizational development and organizational behavior. With this dynamic and changing business environment, the way organizations adapt to changing processes in the business environment means a lot to their performance. Organizations that are able to adapt easily with changing times are able to compete effectively in the market. On the other hand organizations that are very rigid to change are easily overtaken in the business market.