

# Human resource management: managing conflict in the workplace in britain and russ...

[Business](#)



CONTENTS 1. Introduction 2. HRM activities 2.

1 Employee relations 2. 2 Handling organisational conflict 3. Conflict resolution: a theoretical framework 3. 1 Techniques HR managers use for conflict management 3. 2 Types of collisions they manage 3. 3 Role of trade unions in regulating employee disputes 4. Conflict resolution: a comparative case study of UK and Russia 4. 1 British approach to the employee relations 4.

2 Employee relations in Russia 5. Conclusion 6. List of references | 1 2 2 2 3 3 4 5 7 8 | | 1. Introduction Managing human resources (HRM) appears to be a part and parcel of effective and efficient organisation. Inherently, the underlying gist of HRM is to maximise economic profitability from employees by organising them into a combined, productive and inventive power of force (Price 2007, p. 31).

A number of activities can be identified in the HR function, for example “planning, recruitment and appraisal” (McKenna and Beech, 1995, p. 4). However, this work will only highlight the employee relations, with particular attention to conflict resolution. The purpose of this project is therefore to introduce the reader to the critical issues in conflict management. Firstly, to achieve this, I will look at the employee relations from HR standpoint, thus uncovering several levels of conflict in the organisation. Secondly, I will describe the types of disputes and the methods HR managers adopt to solve employee altercations.

On top of that, we will glimpse at the role of trade unions in resolving labour quagmires. Thirdly, a comparative case study based on hands-on evidence <https://assignbuster.com/human-resource-management-managing-conflict-in-the-workplace-in-britain-and-russia-essay/>

would be given to highlight techniques managers apply in two different countries. Lastly, the inference will recapitulate numerous of the incessant thorny problems of contemporary employee relations through the UK-Russian dimension. Hence, revealing the discrepancy between theory and practice. 2.

HRM activities 2. 1 Employee relations Essentially, employee relations are dealing with obviation and resolving issues involving individuals which influence work situations (Gospel and Palmar 1993, p. 3). What is significant is the fact that employee relations differ from industrial relations to the extent that there is an inclination on direct communication with the labour and liaison with the staff at the level of individual (Bright, 1993, p.

42). On a more general note, Bright (1993) argued that organisations need to be capable of handling with employees on both an individual and a representative basis. 2. 2 Handling organisational conflict There may be some justification for claiming that conflict might dissipate precious human resources that would be better focused to other activities, including the pivotal objective of the organisation. Thereby, managing conflict in an organisation is regulated by the rules and established procedures (Edwards, 1994).

Sparrow and Hiltrop (1994, p. 86) identify two levels of conflict in organisation: the collective level and the individual level. With regard to the collective conflict, it can provoke industrial actions including walkouts, go-slows and overtime bans.

Likewise, individual conflict may expose itself as truancy, high personnel turnover and other subversive actions. 3. Conflict resolution: a theoretical framework 3. 1 Techniques HR managers use for conflict management Several effective conflict management techniques can be executed at all levels of an organisation. As a case in point, Wilson (n. d. , p.

) advocates to adopt five methods to curb certain types of conflict in the workplace. The first technique is “ straight speaking”. In other words, manager should embolden his staff members to abstain from “ beating around the bush. ” His second concept is “ generous listening”. It involves sincere listening without prejudging others or their flow of thoughts, this, by-turn, eliminates “ negative misconceptions” that can lead to prejudice. “ Honouring agreements” is the third method that urges employee to honour internal and external agreements as well as oral and non-oral.

The next technique is “ making requests”. It suggests that employee failing to fulfil agreements should devise alternatives, make adjustments and set forth counter offer for consideration. Ultimately, another approach that can be practised by HR management is mentoring. Setting up a successful mentor system where fresh employees can “ learn the ropes” guarantees that core practices are realised and accomplished from the moment a new employee becomes the piece of the organisation. 3.

2 Types of collisions they manage Leopold, Harris and Watson (2005, p. 410) believe that conflict “ is a facet of cooperation and cooperation is a facet of conflict”. To illustrate this apparent paradox, we can closely examine the types of conflicts and classify them clearly into six categories (see Figure 1).

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Research confirms that HR managers face specific conflicts in each kind of dispute (Business Horizons, 1997). | Types Of Conflicts | Specification | | Interpersonal | Communication difficulties, personal irritations; jealousy, embarrassments, insults, | | fights. | Operations issues | Work assignments, vacation scheduling, overtime, union rules, work load, sick leave. | | Discipline | Attendance, drug use, theft, policy violations, sleeping on the job. | | Sexual harassment/ | Touching or offending person of the opposite sex/ | | Race relations | Alleged bias because of race.

| | Pay and promotion | Compensation, transfers, seniority, bumping rights, promotion. | | Work flow | Scheduling, quality of work, work speed, responsibilities, dependencies. Figure 1 Types of conflicts handled by human resource managers \*(Source: Results of the research conducted by Business Horizons magazine (BHM), May-June 1997) 3. 3 Role of trade unions in regulating employee disputes According to Flanders (1975, p. 274), trade unions seek to control or influence the framework of the employment relationship through a number of methods including collective bargaining, joint consultation and individual representation. When dispute between employers and employee remains unsolved, employer can take actions against employees and their unions make take measures against their employer.

Farnham (2000, p. 7) assume that unions balance the power between management and employees. For instance, if an employee is a member of a trade union, he or she could tell workplace representative about complaint before taking any formal action. The trade union can advise on how best to

raise grievance and go with employee to grievance meetings. Many employers, especially those which recognise trade unions, have written procedures in place to discuss with representatives collective grievances or other significant issues affecting all or part of the workforce. Those procedures are important and can be used to address emerging problems at an early stage. 4. Conflict resolution: a comparative case study of UK and Russia 4.

1 British approach to the employee relations British employees were ones infamous for industrial quarrels and strikes (Price, 2007). Hollinshead, Nicholls and Tailby (2003) denote that in the UK a worker is free to take industrial actions, but she or he must acknowledge certain legal and practical aftermaths. But Brown (1994) argues that in the UK withdrawing trade unions leads to worse people management. Inevitably, unions force managers to manage. An impressive body of evidence tells us that UK businesses are being badly affected by poorly managed conflicts in the workplace (McHenry, 2008). McHenry (2008) also observed that: "...the average British employee is spending more than two hours a week dealing with conflict.

This adds up to the loss of more than 370 million working days a year, costing UK employers more than ? 24 billion. " (p. 19). The table below indicates that UK employees are more likely to experience unfavourable emotions as a consequence of conflict.

Two thirds of UK employees (65%) confess to feeling animosity and disappointment in the face of dispute at work, as opposed to 57% across

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total surveyed. This suggests that UK employees are not easily irritated, but ones they are, the emotional tensity increases considerably. Generally, only 12 % of UK employees see conflict as a constructive occasion where they feel invigorated, energized, compared with 24% on average in other countries considered. It is also interesting to note, that as much as 22% of respondents got used to conflict and do nothing to remedy the collision. One of the reason for this could be that UK employees suppress their emotions rather than trying to find the conflict resolution in the workplace.

On the other hand, one can assume that poor line management is culpable when conflict occurs. However, research concludes that of all the countries surveyed the UK employees experience conflict the least, 20% claimed they never have faced with conflict, versus 14% on average, whereas 27% asserted there are never any collisions among their top-management, as opposed to 21% on average. [pic] Figure 2 How does conflict may be felt by British employees (Source: Result of the report by business psychology firm OPP and the CIPD, 2008, p. 19).

4. 2 Employee relations in Russia In Russia employee relations are regulated by the Labour Code. Alashev (2005, p. 11) explains that Labour Code provide a comprehensive framework of regulation of terms and conditions of labour and “ extending unprecedented rights and protection to trade union bodies while the plan and collective agreements enjoying juridical status”. Interestingly, Russia pride itself on the fact that the legal regulations and protection given to labour is the most advanced in the world. The current Russian Labour Code is very employee directed and if conflict arises, the

court predominate the Code clauses over the individual labour contract and usually also sides with the employee.

Information relating to the employee, the work implemented by them, recruitment and layoff dates are to be inserted in the employee labour book and/or labour contract. According to the final body of research, on the one hand, Russian HR managers could be unconfident, “dragging their feet” until the problem became conspicuous at a senior level. On the other hand, they could expediently take notice of the conflict and seek its resolution (Alashev, 2005, p. 23). Although, Russian managers are knowledgeable and affirmative, they often lacked impartiality. Specifically, in conflicts that “pitted an employee” against the organisation or a member of it, the HR manager often assist the firm in information collection, communication with disputants, decision making, or resolution execution. Paradoxically, but such a bias is comprehensible, given that the HR manager is paid by the firm, is hold as a member of the managerial class, and is expected to vindicate the firm’s interests. However, this partiality does, occasionally, seem to erode an HR manager’s effectiveness in handling conflict.

5. Conclusion Conflict in the organisation can be on personal and collective levels and it is up to HR manager to respond to conflict situations swiftly and professionally. Moreover, each manager has its own store of techniques, such as straight speaking, generous listening and honouring agreements. Likewise, types of conflict manager experience every day are diverse, starting from interpersonal difficulties, operational issues, and finishing by work flow dilemmas.



On the other end of the scale, the power of trade unions should be taken into consideration as well. In fact, HR managers can view trade unions as a favourable factor, contributing in the process of communicating and involving employees. British approach in employee relations suggest that employees experience the conflict the least, and the least likely to have seen a conflict escalate, but on the other hand they are the most likely to experience negative emotions as a result of conflict. However, they are not easily aroused. If the conflict occurs they are more likely to see compromise in disagreement.

Moreover, the reluctance to get involve in conflict stands British employees out. Whereas Russian levels of workplace conflict are relatively high. Nonetheless, the possibility for conflict in the fast-paced Russian workplace is identified and dealt with in a structured way. Russian employees are also most likely to have a formal direction in dealing with conflict. The most striking feature is that Russian employees view conflict handling as “crucially important” leadership skill (Alasheev 2005, p. 41). By and large, this paper, however, provided only the basics of employee relations and conflict resolution and further research would be necessary, because the circumstances in which employee relations are conducted vary considerably.

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