

Hrm practices in knowledge workers essay

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Ing. Martin Sikyr, Department of Personnel Management, Faculty of Business Administration, University of Economics, Prague, Winston Churchill Sq.

4, 130 67 Prague 3, Czech Republic, cz Prof. dr.

sc. Damir Boras, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Zagreb, Croatia Ljubica

Bakic-Tomic, Ph. D. Faculty for Teachers, University of Zagreb, Croatia, lj.

hr Abstract What resources are the most important for an organization? That is knowledge and its owners so-called knowledge workers. If an organization wants to be successful, i. e. prosperous, competitive and flexible, its managers must find out an efficient and effective way to manage knowledge workers whose knowledge helps the organization to achieve expected objectives. Knowledge workers may be managed successfully through common and proven Human Resource Management (HRM) practices in job design, recruitment, selection and orientation, performance management, compensation, training and development. These and others HRM practices help the organization and its managers to create conditions for efficient and effective management of workers and their knowledge, including voluntary and mutual creation, sharing and use of knowledge in the organization.

The aim of this paper is to apply the theory and practice of Human Resource Management to the theory and practice of Knowledge Management and propose a possible way of using HRM practices in managing knowledge workers and their knowledge in the organization. The paper is written on the basis of available literature and authors' opinions and experience. Key words: Human Resource Management practices, Knowledge Management, knowledge workers. 1. What is knowledge? What is knowledge? The answer

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to this question is not so simple and unambiguous. The word “ knowledge“ is commonly used in many different meanings (awareness, familiarity, understanding, comprehension, experience, etc.). To define knowledge, we can use the fact that knowledge is always knowledge of something, has its object, and knowledge of someone, has its subject (Tondl, 2002).

The object of knowledge is a certain sequence of symbols that describe elements and matters of the real world. We usually call this sequence of symbols “ data“. The subject of knowledge is a source of knowledge (he/she/it creates, disseminates and mediates knowledge) or a receiver of knowledge (he/she/it acquires and uses knowledge).

The subject of knowledge is able to demonstrate his/her/its knowledge in some way. One of the possible ways of demonstrating one’s own knowledge is to create and use purpose-built stores of data that we usually call “ databases“. A typical subject of knowledge is a human being that creates and uses various databeses in various forms such as documents, periodicals, books, paintings, pictures, multimedia presentations, computer systems and also (and maybe above all) in one’s own memory. We create and use databeses to collect, transfer, store, transform and present data in order to satisfy our actual information need. The information need means our demand to learn something new and is satisfied at the moment of use of information content of data. We use data, interpret data and ascribe some meaning to data. In this moment data changes into “ information“ that satisfies our actual information need and brings us profit.

We can use information in the process of decision making (information reduces uncertainty or ignorance), in the process of communication (information makes possible to share its meaning) and in the process of learning (information supports generation and development of new knowledge). But if we want to use information, we must be able to interpret available data, ascribe some meaning to data and use the information content of data. And just this ability we have thanks to our knowledge. In view of above-mentioned facts we can define “ knowledge“ as our ability to use available resources of data or (if you like) information and our others skills, abilities and experience to solve problems in the process of decision making, communication and learning. From the organization’s point of view, knowledge is the ability to achieve expected objectives.

It is the ability to implement answers to questions Why? How? What? Where? When? Who? How much? etc. If the organization has answers to mentioned questions, it has information. If the organization has the ability to change answers to mentioned questions (it means information) into efficient and effective action that will lead to achieving expected objectives, it has knowledge. Information and knowledge together determines the success of the organization. To have information means to “ know”. To have knowledge means to “ be able”.

For example, if we know what product customers want, but we are not able to produce it efficiently and effectively, we can not be successful as well as if we are able to produce our product efficiently and effectively, but we do not know what product customers really want. To gain access to needed information, the organization usually uses quality information systems (IS).

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To gain access to needed knowledge, the organization usually employs qualified workers. Information stored in databases of information systems and knowledge stored in the memory of workers are strategic resources of the organization. If the organization wants to be successful, it must find out an efficient and effective way to manage both its information resources (i. e. information systems and their information) and its human resources (i. e. workers and their knowledge). Available knowledge of the organization may be divided into explicit knowledge and tacit knowledge (Mladkova, 2005). Explicit (expressible) knowledge is stored in databases of information systems. It is relatively easy created, shared and used. It can be managed through management of information systems and information and communication technologies (IS/ICT). Tacit (hidden) knowledge is stored in memory of workers.

It develops from interaction of explicit knowledge and other knowledge, skills, abilities and experience of workers. It is not easy created, shared and used. It can be managed only through management of individual workers. So that Knowledge Management (process of managing knowledge) requires both efficient and effective Information Management and efficient and effective Human Resource Management.

2. What is Knowledge Management? Knowledge Management is the process of managing knowledge (both explicit knowledge and tacit knowledge) in the organization. The objective is to improve storing, creation, sharing and use of knowledge in the organization and so improve performance of individual workers and the organization as a whole. Knowledge Management is

concerned with the state of knowledge and with the flow of knowledge (Trunecek, 2004).

The state of knowledge is related to storing and accessibility of knowledge in the organization. Explicit knowledge is usually stored in databases of information systems and is relatively easy accessible. Tacit knowledge is stored only in the memory of workers and is not easy accessible. The flow of knowledge is related to creation, sharing and use of knowledge in the organization. Explicit knowledge is created, shared and used through information systems and information and communication technologies (IS/ICT).

Tacit knowledge is created, shared and used through interaction and communication among workers. The application of Knowledge Management in the organization results from the business strategy whose objectives and practices are specified in the information strategy and in the human resource strategy. The information strategy defines objectives and practices for managing information resources (i.

e. information systems and their information). It determines the way of managing explicit knowledge in the organization. The human resource strategy defines objectives and practices for managing human resources (i. e.

orkers and their knowledge). It determines the way of managing tacit knowledge in the organization. The application of Knowledge Management in the organization leads to efficient and effective management of information

and human resources and so leads to efficient and effective management of explicit and tacit knowledge.

3. Who is a knowledge worker? A knowledge worker is a worker that has some specific knowledge. This specific knowledge is fundamental to successful operation of the organization. The organization must employ a suitable knowledge worker to gain access to the specific knowledge (Mladkova, 2005). A knowledge worker is able to use his/her specific knowledge in practice. The specific knowledge may be partly subconscious and a knowledge worker does not need to be aware of the importance of his/her specific knowledge to the organization.

The access of others to the specific knowledge may be limited. Others do not need to be able to learn the specific knowledge because of lack of their own skills, abilities, experience, interest, time, money, etc. or their access to the specific knowledge may be restricted by certain rules. If we want to decide “who is” a knowledge worker, we must take into consideration not only one’s own knowledge and his/her willingness to create, share and use the knowledge, but also one’s job (role) in the organization. In other words, the particularity and importance of one’s own knowledge to successful operation of the organization must be always viewed in the context of one’s job (role) in the organization. Every worker who has required knowledge and is competent and willing to create, share and use the knowledge to perform successfully in his/her job (role) in the organization must be taken as a knowledge worker.

For example, a knowledge worker may be a charwoman as well as a Chief Executive Officer (CEO) if they have the required and specific knowledge to perform successfully in their jobs (roles) in the organization. If the CEO has lack of required and specific knowledge to perform his/her work, he/she is useless and redundant. However, the same is not true in the case of the competent and willing charwoman that works excellently and what is more, she brings up ideas that improve her performance. Such workers are required and the organization does its best to find, employ and keep them.

4. How to manage knowledge workers? Following above mentioned facts, it is quite clear that if an organization wants to be successful, i. e. prosperous, competitive and flexible, its managers must find out an efficient and effective way to manage knowledge workers (below only workers). The workers own specific knowledge that helps the organization to achieve expected objectives. The knowledge, that is fundamental to successful operation of the organization, is mainly tacit (hidden) knowledge that is stored only in the memory of workers, is not easy accessible and is created, shared and used only through interaction and communication among workers. To gain access to the knowledge, the organization must find out an efficient and effective way to find, employ and keep qualified workers that will be competent and willing to create, share and use their knowledge to perform successfully in their jobs (roles) in the organization. In this case, the organization needs efficient and effective Human Resource Management (HRM) and proven HRM practices especially in: job design, recruitment, selection and orientation, performance management, compensation, training and development.

These HRM practices help the organization and its managers to create conditions for efficient and effective management of workers and their knowledge, including voluntary and mutual creation, sharing and use of knowledge in the organization. 4. 1 Job design Job design is the process of defining tasks and grouping them together to form particular jobs in the organization. In view of efficient and effective management of workers and their knowledge in the organization, it is important to design jobs that will meet needs both the organization and workers.

Jobs in the organization must be motivating – complex, various, significant, autonomous and using regular feedback (Dvorakova et al. , 2007). A complex job is integrated and meaningful, with visible output. A various job makes possible to do various activities and use various practices and so use and develop one's own knowledge, skills, abilities and experience. A significant job gives certain influence on the internal and external surroundings of the organization.

A autonomous job makes possible to control one's own work and act relatively independently. Using regular feedback about actual performance and working conditions from managers to workers and from workers to managers enables managers and workers to improve performance and working conditions of individual workers and the organization as a whole. Motivating jobs evoke the sensation of usefulness, importance, responsibility, fellowship and make possible to use and develop one's own knowledge, skills, abilities and experience. They create conditions for voluntary and mutual creation, sharing and use of knowledge in the organization. 4. 2 Recruitment, selection and orientation Recruitment is the <https://assignbuster.com/hrm-practices-in-knowledge-workers-essay/>

process of seeking suitable applicants for potential employment in the organization.

Selection is the process of identifying the probably best applicant who has required knowledge, skills, abilities and experience and will be competent and willing to perform successfully in the job. Orientation is the process of adaptation of the new worker to conditions and requirements of the job and the organization. In view of efficient and effective management of workers and their knowledge in the organization, it is important during recruitment, selection and orientation of workers to pay attention to workers' personal characteristics. Workers must be able and willing to cooperate and communicate and accept the way of sharing their knowledge (skills, abilities and experience) based on reciprocity, reputation and altruism (Mladkova, 2005). Reciprocity means the practice of voluntary and mutual sharing one's own knowledge in return for knowledge received if necessary. Reputation means the practice of voluntary and mutual sharing one's own knowledge in return for making a good reputation as a qualified worker.

Altruism means the practice of voluntary and mutual sharing one's own knowledge in return for the sensation of doing something important and useful. To assess required personal characteristics of applicants and workers we can use interview, psychological tests or assessment centers. The ability and willingness of workers to cooperate and communicate and accept the way of sharing their knowledge (skills, abilities and experience) based on reciprocity, reputation and altruism create and improve conditions for voluntary and mutual creation, sharing and use of knowledge in the organization. . 3 Performance management Performance management is the <https://assignbuster.com/hrm-practices-in-knowledge-workers-essay/>

process of permanent improving performance (abilities, activities and outputs) of individual workers and the organization as a whole.

The process of performance management has usually three repeating stages – performance agreement, performance management, performance appraisal – through which managers ensure that workers' abilities, activities and outputs are consistent with expected objectives of the organization. The first stage – performance agreement – includes a written or verbal agreement between a manager and a worker about particular aspects of performance (abilities, activities and outputs) that are relevant to requirements and objectives of the job and the organization. The agreement is always for a certain period (usually for one year). In view of efficient and effective management of workers and their knowledge in the organization, it is important to agree with the worker also on training and development of his/her knowledge, skills, abilities and experience necessary for successful performance in the job. The second stage – performance management – means everyday management of the worker to meet given requirements and achieve expected objectives of the job and the organization.

In view of efficient and effective management of workers and their knowledge in the organization, it is important to lead the worker to voluntary and mutual creation, sharing and use of his/her knowledge. The third stage – performance appraisal – provides feedback from the manager to the worker and from the worker to the manager through the appraisal interview at the end of the agreed period. The purpose is to appraise the worker's performance (abilities, activities and outputs), find way to solve eventual

problems and agree on performance requirements and objectives for the next period.

In view of efficient and effective management of workers and their knowledge in the organization, it is important to evaluate actual level of worker's knowledge, skills, abilities and experience necessary for successful performance in the job as well as the worker's ability and willingness to cooperate, communicate and accept the voluntary and mutual creation, sharing and use of knowledge in the organization. The process of performance management is essential for efficient and effective management of workers and their knowledge in the organization. 4. 5 Compensation Compensation is the process of offering compensation to workers for work done. A modern compensation system includes both monetary compensations (wages and salaries) and non-monetary compensations (appreciation and benefits like cars, notebooks, mobile phones, flexible hours, homeworking, housing, insurance, sick leave, medical and dental care, vacation, holidays, leisure activities, training, etc. . In view of efficient and effective management of workers and their knowledge in the organization, the applied compensation system would have been fair and stimulating to find, employ and keep qualified workers and motivate them to create, share and use their knowledge in the organization voluntarily and mutually.

The offering monetary and non-monetary compensations should also motivate workers to permanent and systematic improvement of their performance, knowledge, skills, abilities and experience. . 6 Training and development Training is the process of learning knowledge, skills, abilities
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and experience that enable workers to perform successfully in their jobs.

Development is the process of learning knowledge, skills, abilities and experience that enable workers to meet changes in conditions and requirements of their jobs. The process of workers training and development must be permanent and systematic.

In view of efficient and effective management of workers and their knowledge in the organization, it is important to motivate workers to permanent and systematic training and development of their knowledge, skills, abilities and experience. Workers who have some specific knowledge, skills, abilities or experience should be involved in the process of workers training and development as lecturers. It increases motivation of the workers as well as improves conditions for voluntary and mutual creation, sharing and use of knowledge in the organization. Conclusion The efficient and effective Human Resource Management (HRM) and the use of proven HRM practices in job design, recruitment, selection and orientation, performance management, compensation, training and development can help the organization and its managers to create conditions for efficient and effective management of workers and their knowledge in the organization. In view of voluntary and mutual creation, sharing and use of knowledge in the organization, it is important: to design motivating jobs (complex, various, significant, autonomous and using regular feedback) that will meet needs both the organization and workers, to recruit, select and orientate workers paying attention to their personal characteristics, especially to their ability and willingness to cooperate and communicate and accept the way of sharing of knowledge, skills, abilities and experience based on reciprocity,

reputation and altruism, to apply the process of performance management based on three repeating stages - performance agreement, performance management, performance appraisal - and leading to permanent improvement of performance (abilities, activities and outputs) of individual workers and the organization as a whole, to apply the fair and stimulating monetary and non-monetary compensation system that enables to find, employ and keep qualified workers and motivate them to permanent and systematic improvement of their performance as well as training and development of their knowledge, skills, abilities and experience, to involve workers with some specific knowledge, skills, abilities or experience in the proces of workers training and development as lectors.