

A review of the employee relations in the british airways

[Business](#), [Industries](#)



According to One World (n. d.), a global union of the world's ten biggest airlines, the British Airways, which is a founder member of the alliance, is the largest airline in the United Kingdom and is the leading international airline in the world. It has always been the first on the line at everything it did – they were the first to provide jet and super passenger services, and fully-flat beds, and the first to carry out “ weather-beating autolandings”. The purpose of this paper is to discuss and clearly evaluate the quality of employee relations within the British Airways.

It will cover the context of employee relations, employee relations and employee relations strategies with the said organisation. In addition, theories and theoretical perspectives will be used to explain the kind of employee relations in the British Airways. However, to begin with, two definitions of Employee Relations will be provided. Employee Relations Defined According to Heery and Noon (2001), “ Employee Relations is a common title for the industrial relations function within personnel management and is also sometimes used as an alternative label for the academic field of industrial relations.”

On the other hand, according to the NASA's Goddard Space Flight Centre Office of Human Relations (2001), “ Employee Relations involves the body of work concerned with maintaining employer-employee relationships that contribute to satisfactory productivity, motivation and morale...is concerned with preventing and resolving problems involving individuals which arise out of or affect work situations. ” Both definitions treated Employee Relations as

a part of something that is bigger – a function of industrial relations and a “body of work”.

Also, both pointed out that Employee Relations deals with the people that works at a company or organisation – the employer and employee. Lastly, both have the same purpose and that is to manage the relationships of these people with one another as both definitions aims on the development of the company or the organisation. However, Heery and Noon’s definition of Employee Relations is more inclined as a term that refers to a certain function of industrial relations that is concerned to managing personnel in a company, organisation or a simple workplace.

It gives another face to industrial relations, making it appear that it has a broad scope, it shows that the industrial relations does not only focuses on trade union but also with employee management (Heery & Noon 2001). In other words, Employee Relations, in Heery and Noon’s definition, appears to be a function under industrial relations. On the other hand, the definition of NASA focuses on the very significance of Employee Relations and not regarding it as a “branch” of industrial relations.

Although it pointed out that it is a “body of work” which can be understood as a part of work that focuses on a specific task which is preserving the relationship of the employer and the employee with one another in order to sustain a healthy workenvironment. Context of Employee Relations and the Balance of Power Though Employee Relations always deals with the employer-employee relationship, its manner of management will vary

whether in every country an environment, even between a company and an organisation. In this paper, the focus would be on an organisational context.

According to Heathfield (2007), organisations should maximise their employees' strengths or they will transfer somewhere else. The employers should make their employees feel that they are useful in the organisation in order for them to gather confidence and self-worth. They should trust them since they have a certain kind of maturity that can handle important matters in the organisation and, also, when a work is done, the employees should be given compliments and positive reactions. In addition, since employees are important in organisations, thus, they should not ignore them (Capital Outsourcing Solutions n. d.).

They should also be treated equally and with respect in order for them to give out “ positive attitudes” in the organisation that can greatly help its “ productivity, competitiveness and profits”. According to Capital Outsourcing Solutions (n. d.), agendas like providing employee handbook, suggestion programmes, policy manuals, employee performance appraisals, employee assistance program, performance incentives, wage surveys, social activities, and management/employee committees are effective in boosting up the morale of the employees and to establish an environment of teamwork.

Teamwork is important in an organisation since it enables the organisation to achieve things that cannot be done by a single person alone (Heathfield 2007). British Airways is proud to say that they are involved in every aspect of the Human Resources. One of the topmost priorities of the Human Resources of the British Airways is to treat each and every one with respect

and with paramount professionalism. Another significant aspect they wish to maintain good staff morale, in addition, they make sure that every employee will work as a team through a “ clear management structure” to assist them all throughout (British Airways Recruitment, n. d.).

The organisation also certify that their managers are flexible enough to take on the changes that constantly occur, in addition, they also help out in simplifying their working process in order to enable their employees to help the organisation manage its performance. They throw in their every effort on these matters to give good quality of service to their customers and to motivate the employees to work at their best. According to the British Airways Recruitment (n. d.), the organisation values and promotes diversity and equality even at the point of recruitment.

They believe that in order to achieve the value of respect, which is very important to an employer-employee relationship, they are responsible to treat each other equally when it comes to every opportunities. The British Airways also aims to maximise the employee’s full potential in their training and career development methods. They are proud to say that they have every extraordinary training resources which consists of computer-based interactive learning centres, library facilities, reference materials, audiotapes and video-based learning (British Airways Recruitment, n. d.).

in addition to the learning facilities, there are also various programmes that aims to develop one’s leadership skills, team-building skills , presentation and negotiation skills, etc. As for rewards and benefits, the organisation provides reduced air fare travel and travel discounts, holiday entitlements, pension

and private healthcare schemes, profit share schemes, bonuses, employee share schemes, sports and social amenities and a chance to join British Airway clubs, and subsidised staff restaurant (British Airways Recruitment, n. d.). They also keep an eye on the wages in all their industries and assure the sufficiency of the salaries.

Actions mentioned above are necessary as proven by the motivations theories. There are many motivation theories since the act of motivating varies from person to person. Motivation is the most common and effective way in accomplishing work and in improving oneself and the organisation. Among the theories of motivation are Theory X that is attributed to Sigmund Freud, Theory Y by Douglas McGregor, Theory Z by Abraham Maslow, the Hygiene/Motivation Theory by Frederick Herzberg, Contingency Approach that is being supported by Fred Luthans, Expectancy Theory of Victor Vroom, and other theories by Chris Argyris, Rensis Likert (Accel Team 2008).

Theory X assumes that people do not like to work at all and that in order for them to work is through giving them a reward or through coercion and punishment while Theory Y is just the opposite, according to McGregor, people on the contrary likes to work in order for them to achieve self-discipline and self-development. On the other hand, Maslow's Theory Z states that people has needs that they need to satisfy – “ physiological needs, safety needs, love needs, esteem needs and self-actualization needs” – and he only fulfils them by working hard.

Still based from the human needs is the Hygiene/Motivation Theory of Herzberg whom divided the needs into two groups – “ animal needs”

(supervision, interpersonal relations, working conditions and salary) and “human needs” (recognition, work, responsibility and advancement). According to Herzberg, people work to accomplish the mentioned needs and by fulfilling them one by one do they get even more motivated to work for “work accomplishment” is their “self-enlightened interests”.

When it comes to Argyris, organisations should fully utilise their employees by involving them in decision making in order for them to be satisfied in their workplace since, according to Heathfield (2007), employees should feel relevant in the organisation and that can be only achieve in involving them in making important decisions. In connection to Argyris’ theory, Likert also agree that decision making should be done by a group involving the employees in it in order to achieve outstanding outcomes sine being able to participate in such are great way to be motivated.

However, Luthans supported the Contingency Approach and believed that not all practices fit every job and organisations, thus, flexibility in leadership should be needed. Likewise, Vroom’s Expectancy Theory talks about that an employees’ rewards also varies, some will want an increase in salary while other would want promotion, that means, employers should rewards employees with something that is important to them. In the past, employees prayed and wished for them to be chosen by the employer, however, due to the changing times, it is now the vice versa.

According to Rousseau and Shperling (2003), the shift in the balance of power was due to the rise of high-technology and the sudden increase of dependence of organisations in the employees. In addition, the shift was also

caused by the development of the global economic conditions which result for opportunities to widen for employees in the field of the information technology, finance, sales, marketing and general management (New South Wales Higher Certificate Education 1999).

The shift of the balance of power in the employer-employee relations is said to be due to the growth of knowledge-based organisations, beginning of an organisation to appreciate the intellectual and relational assets of human, and sudden necessity for them to hold on to important employees and to draw talented ones towards them (Rousseau & Shperling 2003). There is already an extra need for organisations to make themselves as interesting as possible for employees to consider them working for them.

According to the New South Wales Higher Certificate Education (1999), the labour market is no longer controlled by the employers since it is already been taken over by the employees. British Airways is also affected by this shift in the balance of power; they always use their business' diversity and the excitement one can experience in an airline industry in order to attract employees for they know that graduates or employees in general are looking for an organisation where they can develop a lot of skills and a competitive and challenging environment.

They accept anyone regardless of age, sex, status, race, sexual orientation, religion and whether you are disabled or not. By doing this, they are confident to be able to gather the most talented and capable people for the job they provide. Employee Relations Issues Like in other environments, there would always be issues and conflicts, thus, Employee Relations is no

exception. Conflicts in Employee Relations will always be present and the best thing for the “ manager” – the one who maintains the relationship of the employer and employee – is to resolve it as early as possible so that it would not affect the organisation’s productivity.

These conflicts exists due to the diversity of people working in the organisation, no individuals are the same, thus, disagreements are most like to occur due to differences. According to Kelly Services (2008), conflicts in a workplace can waste a huge amount of time and can really affect the performance of the organisation through lost productivity, perception costs and team erosion. On a more personal note, conflicts can result to withdrawal (physically and emotionally), job resignation, cutting of personal relations and violence(Rau-Foster 2000).

However, conflicts do not always bring negativity to the organisation for it also helps to strengthen the relationship of each people that are involved. It can improve their creativity, productivity, decision making skills, performance and interpersonal relationships (Kelly Services 2008; Graves 2007). According to Graves (2007), the conflicts that materialised can be classified into three: task conflict, process conflict and relationship conflict.

Conflicts comes from disagreements over “ business ideas, decisions and actions” difference in personality, vague classification of responsibility, limited resources and private interests or can easily be classified into thee – task conflict, process conflict and relationship conflict. (Kelly Services 2008; Rau-Foster 2000). The conflicts from the said causes with the exception of the personality differences are easy to solve through compromise, however,

personality clashes are entirely a different matter for its resolution lies within the person.

A change to a person's behaviour and attitude is needed, unfortunately, turning a person into another is never an easy task, and so the best solution is for the person to remain civil towards the others (Kelly Services 2008). Since British Airways is a diverse organisation with diverse employees, most conflicts may come out because of age, disability, unbalance lifestyle, gender, harassment and bullying, race, religion and sexual orientation.

According to the British Airways (n. d.), in order to maintain a positive Employee Relations, the organisation challenged all the suppositions and stereotypes regarding about age, gave additional trainings to disabled employees to maximise their potential, provides flexible working options to help the employees to balance their professional and home life, established numerous flexible working initiatives for women, guaranteed that employees know their policy regarding harassment and bullying to continue promote respect in the organisation as well as dignity, listened to the ideas of employees from racial minorities, provided prayer facilities and published monthly religious festivals newsletters for employees with different religions and beliefs, lastly, they offered inclusive working environment for every employees which includes those with different sexual orientation.

The British Airways also joined other organisations that are concerned with disabled, racial minorities, harassment and bullying, other religions, and different sexual orientation. Employee Relations Strategies In order to

maintain a positive relationship between the employer and the employee different strategies are used.

According to New Zealand Qualifications Authority (2003), strategies are developed based on the external and organisational environment, current status of the organisation's Employee Relations, influences and changes in the organisation, wants of the employees, logical conclusion, and in the process of the organisation's decision making. To implement these strategies, resources should be considered, and is based on the organisational policies and legal practice. Once a strategy is implemented, it should be assessed whether it is effective or not and this can be done quantitatively (analysis and statistics) and qualitatively (survey and opinions). Changes within a strategy are necessary if problems surfaced. Back in the year 1974-1981 when the British Overseas Airways Corporation and British European Airways came together to form the British Airways, one of the major problems that they encountered was about the cultural background of the employees.

In the merging of the two organisations, one culture is required to embrace the methods and practices of the other and it is here that the organisation got its biggest problem. In order to solve this cultural conflict, a Staff Development Initiative was applied, a cultural training to help the employees to do their jobs efficiently and to help them to be motivated to do their best (British Airways Case Study, 2008). In addition, the British Airways used its strategy called "Putting People First as Putting People First Again" and gave updated courses to the personnel to improve the relationship of the

employees to one another for the organisation experienced another set of problems during a management change during the early 1990s.

Back to the present, there is the Diversity Strategy of the organisation, which was discussed earlier, where they cater to any employees regardless of age, religion, sex, sexual orientation and also to disabled ones. To see where the British Airways is now, it is safe to say that the strategies that the organisation developed and implemented at effective and helped them to be the largest airlines in the world. The Staff Development Initiative helped to solve the problem of cultural clash that was brought by the merging of two organisations and the “ Putting People First as Putting People First Again” strategy contributed in to resolve the conflicts brought by the change of management.

Lastly, at present, the Diversity Strategy is currently helping the organisation to gather all the talented people to work for them. The Employee Relations of the British Airways helped them to sustain its status in the airline industries. From maximising the potential of its employees, to respecting and giving them the benefits they needed and deserved, and to resolving possible conflict at the early point in time, the employees are always motivated to work with the team for the improvement of service and productivity of the organisation.

Reference:

Accel Team. 2008. Employee motivations. Retrieved April 25, 2008 from http://www.accel-team.com/motivation/theory_02.html British Airways. n.

d. Diversity strategy. Retrieved April 25, 2008 from http://www.britishairways.com/travel/crdivstrategy/public/en_gb.

British Airways Recruitment. n. d. Training and career development. Retrieved April 26, 2008 from <http://www.britishairwaysjobs.com/baweb1/?newms=info2>.

British Airways Recruitment. n. d. Equality and diversity: British Airways policy. Retrieved April 26, 2008 from <http://www.britishairwaysjobs.com/baweb1/?newms=info219>.

British Airways Recruitment. n. d. Graduates. Retrieved April 26, 2008 from <http://www.britishairwaysjobs.com/baweb1/?newms=info37>.

British Airways Recruitment. n. d. Rewards and benefits. Retrieved April 26, 2008 from <http://www.britishairwaysjobs.com/baweb1/?newms=info3>.

Capital Outsourcing Solutions. n. d. Employee relations. Retrieved April 25, 2008 from <http://capitaloutsourcingsolutions.com/794/5101.html>.

Graves, K. 2007. Managing conflict. Retrieved April 25, 2008 from http://www.thegoodmanager.com/managing_conflict.htm.

Heathfield, S. M. 2007. Twenty dumb things organizations do to mess up their relationship with people. p. 1. Retrieved April 25, 2008 from <http://humanresources.about.com/od/interpersonalcommunication/a/twenty mistakes.htm>.

Kelly Services. 2008. Workplace conflict. Retrieved April 25, 2008 from http://www.kellyservices.com/web/au/ccmanager/en/pages/110_conflict.html.

<https://assignbuster.com/a-review-of-the-employee-relations-in-the-british-airways/>

New South Wales Higher Certificate Education. 1999. Influences on employment relations – the changing roles of stakeholders. Retrieved April 25, 2008 from http://www.hsc.csu.edu.au/business_studies/employment_relations/influences_emprel/Influencesonemploy.html

New Zealand Qualifications Authority. 2003. Human resource management: manage employee relations strategy and plans. Retrieved April 25, 2008 from <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/nqfdocs/units/pdf/11545.pdf>.

One World. n. d. British Airways. Retrieved April 25, 2008 from <http://www.oneworld.com/ow/member-airlines/british-airways> Rau-Foster, M. 2000. Conflict in the workplace. Retrieved April 25, 2008 from <http://www.workplaceissues.com/arconflict.htm>.

Rousseau, D. M. & Shperling, Z. 2003. Pieces of the action: ownership and the changing employment relationship. p. 554-560. Retrieved April 25, 2008 from <http://www.heinz.cmu.edu/bio/papers/Rousseau-PiecesOfTheAction.pdf>.

Sloan Work andFamilyResearch Network. n. d. Definitions of employee relations. Retrieved April 25, 2008 from [http://wfnetwork.bc.edu/glossary_entry.php?term=Employee%20Relations,%20Definition\(s\)%20of&area](http://wfnetwork.bc.edu/glossary_entry.php?term=Employee%20Relations,%20Definition(s)%20of&area).

All Thinking Made Easy. 2008. British Airways case study. Retrieved April 25, 2008 from http://ivythesis.typepad.com/term_paper_topics/2008/02/british-airways.html.