

| <b>YEAR</b> | <b>TRIPOS</b>                  | <b>PAPER NO. &amp; TITLE</b>        | <b>NAME OF AUTHOR</b> |
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| 2014        | Engineering Tripos<br>Part IIA | 3E5 HUMAN<br>RESOURCE<br>MANAGEMENT | Andreas Richter       |

1 (a) Define vertical and horizontal alignment of HR practices. Provide one example for each. [10%]

- Vertical alignment describes the fit between competitive business strategy and HR strategy. It describes how an organization's HR strategy supports its competitive business strategy. Horizontal alignment describes the fit among different HR strategies. It describes how individual HR practices fit together and support each other.
- Better students may provide clear and telling examples from the lecture or the book for both vertical and horizontal alignment.

(b) If organizations pursue a committed expert strategy, which personnel selection tools would be more, and which would be less, relevant for them in order to assess the fit of job candidates? [30%]

- Organizations pursuing a committed expert strategy are concerned with selecting candidates that fit with both the organization and the job.
- Therefore selection tools that assess cultural fit as well as selection tools that assess job fit are needed.
- Personality tests, as well as résumés, interview and biographic data may serve to assess cultural fit.
- Cognitive ability tests, résumés, interview and biographic data may serve to assess job fit.

(c) Organisations pursuing a loyal soldier strategy should design jobs with low levels of autonomy. Discuss the validity of this statement. [30%]

- From a strategic HR perspective, it is true that jobs with low levels of autonomy present a good fit with a loyal soldier strategy, because such jobs have simplified tasks and routines, and are concerned with cost reduction.

- From a motivational perspective, however, employees are motivated by autonomy, and hence may show enhanced levels of performance if autonomy is high, irrespective of their organization's HR strategy. In this context, students may discuss the Hovey & Beard company case from class, where employees performed simple tasks (painting wooden toys) but showed strong resistance when management redesigned their jobs in such a way that their autonomy was substantially reduced. Students may similarly provide examples from Southwestern Airline, a case that has been introduced in class. Although this company pursues a loyal soldier strategy, it is highly successful (in part) through providing employees with high autonomy and motivating jobs.

(d) Organisations pursuing a bargain labourer strategy should use idealistic messaging to recruit new hires. Discuss the validity of this statement. [30%]

- From a strategic HR perspective, it is true that idealistic messaging presents a good fit with a bargain laborer strategy.
- However, idealistic messaging usually draws an incorrect (i.e., positively biased) picture of what employees can expect in a job. It may therefore result in an unrealistic job preview, which in turn may result in reality shock and high turnover.
- It may also negatively affect employee motivation.
- Moreover, students may discuss ethical implications of idealistic messaging.

2 (a) Describe the three aspects of performance that comprise the General Performance Factor. Provide one example for each aspect. Explain their differences. [30%]

- These three aspects are task performance (declarative knowledge and procedural knowledge and skills), citizenship performance (organizational and interpersonal), and counterproductive performance (organizational and interpersonal).
- Better students will provide clear descriptions of each, telling examples, and correctly explain their differences.

(b) Describe four different rating errors that may bias performance evaluations. Provide one example for each error. [30%]

- Various rating errors have been introduced in class and course book, such as Central tendency error; Contrast error; Halo error; Recency error; Primacy error; Leniency effect; or the Fundamental Attribution Error.
- Better students will correctly describe four errors, and provide a telling example for each.

(c) How can these rating errors be remedied? [40%]

- Both lecture and course book have addressed four ways to counter rater errors: increasing rater awareness; Rating standardization; Training (e.g., frame-of-reference training); and Rating formats.

3 (a) What are the benefits and drawbacks of cognitive ability testing? [20%]

- Potential problems related to cognitive ability testing concern legality, fairness & acceptability, and are detailed in the course book.
- Advantages of cognitive ability testing include their reliability, validity, and utility.

(b) An interview conducted by an experienced manager is a suitable tool for personnel selection. Discuss the validity of this statement. [40%]

- This statement needs to be discussed in the light of various contingencies. There is cumulated evidence suggesting that an unstructured interview of a single experienced manager has low validity. Validity can, however, be enhanced by training managers, standardizing the evaluation of interview responses; structuring the interview; and by using multiple interviewers, among other things.
- Moreover, this statement's validity depends on the weight of the interview for the final personnel selection decision (see point c). If the interview is being used as sole decision making tool, the drawbacks inherent to the method cannot be remedied by complementary information that other selection tools (e.g., tests, bio data, etc.) may provide.

(c) How can managers combine information from various personnel selection tools in order to make final selection decisions? [40%]

- Managers may be advised to employ the incremental validity approach, which requires to weight and add up information from different selection tools. This process can take different forms, which have been introduced in class, and are briefly described as follows:
  - Predictor Weighting: Combines a set of selection scores into an overall score in which some measures weight more than others
  - Minimum Cutoff Approach: Eliminating applicants with unacceptable scores on an assessment
  - Multiple Hurdle Approach: Applicants must meet the minimum requirement of one selection method before they can proceed to the next
  - Banding Approach: Uses statistical analysis to cluster scores into comparable categories

**END OF PAPER**