

YEAR	TRIPOS	PAPER NO. & TITLE	NAME OF AUTHOR
2010	Engineering Tripos Part IIA	3E5 Human Resource Management	Dr Jochen Menges

1. (a) Describe the four common HR strategies. [40%]

- Internal/Cost HR Strategy: The Loyal Soldier – Combining an internal orientation with a cost leadership strategy results in a Loyal Soldier HR strategy (emphasis on long-term employees with a focus on reducing costs).
- External/Cost HR Strategy: The Bargain Labourer – Combining an external orientation with a cost leadership strategy results in a Bargain Labourer HR strategy (emphasis on short-term employees with a focus on reducing costs).
- Internal/Differentiation HR Strategy: The Committed Expert – Combining internal orientation with differentiation strategy results in Committed Expert HR strategy (emphasis on long-term employees with focus on producing unique goods and services.)
- External/Differentiation HR Strategy: The Free Agent – Combining external orientation with differentiation strategy forms Free Agent HR Strategy (combines emphasis on short-term employees with focus on producing unique goods and services).

(b) Explain the four general approaches to job design. [40%]

- Mechanistic approach: This approach uses principles of scientific management to create jobs that eliminate wasted efforts so an organization can produce goods and services quickly. The goal of this approach is to simplify work tasks as much as possible. Workers focus on completing only one task at a time and work tasks are repetitive. Workers tend to specialize so they become very efficient in completing their work.
- Motivational approach: This approach emphasizes the study and understanding of the human mind and human behaviour. Increasing employees' enjoyment of their work and thus increasing their effort is a major goal of this approach. The motivational approach seeks to design work so that it is complex and challenging. Under this approach the belief is that workers are intrinsically motivated when they perceive their work to have meaning, when they feel personal responsibility for work outcomes, and when workers have knowledge of the results from their work efforts. This approach is good for work that requires innovation or creativity. Work designed using the motivational approach allows workers autonomy and is likely to increase worker satisfaction and retention.

- Perceptual Approach: This approach emphasizes simplifying mental demands on workers and thereby decreasing errors. As a result, the perceptual approach to job design usually results in work characterized by sequential processing and low autonomy. Safety and prevention of accidents is a high priority.
- Biological Approach: This approach to job design emphasizes the physical stresses and demands placed on workers. It is associated with ergonomics, which concerns methods of designing work to prevent physical injury. Work processes are designed to eliminate movements that can lead to physical injury or excess fatigue.

(c) Relate the four approaches to job design to the HR strategies. [20%]

- The Loyal Soldier or Bargain Labourer HR strategies are likely to benefit from the mechanistic approach to organizing work.
- The motivational approach is appropriate for an organization pursuing differentiation strategies and a Committed Expert or Free Agent HR strategy.
- The perceptual approach is commonly found in organizations pursuing a Loyal Soldier or Bargain Labourer HR strategy.
- Work design from the biological perspective helps organizations with Bargain Labourer or Loyal Soldier HR strategies to balance efficiency with the physical needs of workers.

2. (a) Identify and discuss at least four factors involved in assessing the effectiveness of selection methods. [40%]

- Reliability - measure is consistent over time
- Validity - measure is relevant for job performance
- Utility - costs associated with a selection method
- Legality and fairness - compliance with legal requirements and avoidance of inappropriate bias
- Acceptability - the perception of applicants concerning the method

(b) What are the ways to assess the validity of an employee selection measure? [30%]

- To be valid, a method of selecting employees must accurately predict who will perform the job well.
- Content Validity is supported when experts agree that the content of the assessment reflects the knowledge needed to perform well on the job.
- Criterion-related validity strategy differs from the content validation strategy in that the former uses correlation coefficients to show that test or interview scores are related to measures of job performance.

(c) How can the validity of employment interviews be improved? [30%]

- Structure them by using a list of predetermined questions based on knowledge and skills identified as critical for success. This ensures that all applicants are asked the same questions.
- Incorporate multiple interviewers and use standardized evaluation
- Use situational questions that address what applicant would do in a hypothetical situation, and behavioural questions that focus on past behaviour

3. (a) What are typical reasons for voluntary employee turnover? [40%]

- Quick Decision to Leave: begins with external event that causes employee to rethink the employment relationship.
- Calculated Decision to Leave: an event causes individual to begin thinking about leaving the organization.
- Comparison with Other Alternatives: some external event initiates thoughts about leaving the organization such as a job offer from another firm.
- Sense of Dissatisfaction: no specific event causes employee to think about quitting.

(b) Discuss and explain what steps an organisation can take to reduce voluntary turnover. [60%]

- effective staffing that includes realistic job previews and the selection of employees who fit with the organization and job
- provide training and development such as tuition reimbursement for formal education programs and offer sabbaticals and other learning opportunities
- have career paths that provide growth and promotion opportunities for employees
- develop fair pay practices and competitive compensation and pay employees for learning new skills
- facilitate conflict resolution among employees and establish quick and fair grievance procedures
- try to understand why employees choose to leave the organization—e.g., use exit interviews to gather information and use information to improve the organization and processes
- during the selection process, emphasize employee fit with the organization and the job so they can pursue goals and activities important to them and do work that fits with their interests and life plans
- try to meet employee needs continuously because once an employee has decided to quit, it is often too late to change the employee's mind

- keep track of employee satisfaction levels, what issues are important to employees and which facets of the work experience might need improvement,
- effectively socialize employees so they develop social relationships within the organization and become embedded

4. (a) How is citizenship performance different from task performance? [20%]

- Task performance contributes to actual production of goods or services.
- Citizenship performance is behaviour that contributes to social and psychological environment of the organization.

(b) What are common problems with performance measures? [30%]

- rater errors and bias, e.g., central tendency error – pattern of placing almost everyone in middle of scale; contrast error – raters compare people with one another; halo error – assessment is based on general impression of employee rather than on employee's specific contributions; recency error – place too much emphasis on recent behaviours and outcomes; primacy error – place too much emphasis on behaviour that is first observed. (The student should mention at least one example error)
- situational influences, i.e. subjective ratings are frequently contaminated and deficient because raters fail to account for situational influences
- changes over time; the most common pattern for someone new to job is period of rapidly increasing performance followed by fairly stable plateau

(c) Briefly discuss positive and negative feedback and the usual employee performance outcomes from each. [20%]

- Positive feedback includes messages that communicate high performance outcomes: higher motivation when employees expect to receive benefits from continued high performance; positive feedback can increase motivation when it is linked to future goals; and create a sense of accomplishment that encourages sustained effort
- Negative feedback includes messages about low performance and a need to improve outcomes: if negative feedback is received as criticism, employees become less motivated and more likely to experience conflict with others; initially, employees may increase effort but will continue effort only when they are confident they can do what is necessary to improve.

(d) Describe the components for effectively communicating feedback for performance improvement. [30%]

- feedback must be perceived as accurate, so the person providing feedback must be seen as credible

- build a relationship so the receiver has confidence in the ability of the person providing feedback to provide helpful advice
- supervisors should clarify the behaviours they are looking for when providing feedback
- employees should be treated as individuals and personal circumstances should be taken into account