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Human resource management

It's often said that people are an organization's greatest resource. Yet, until fairly recently, human resource management was not considered as critical to success as other business operations, like marketing, finance or sales. This notion has been largely altered by new technology, globalized markets and changes in organizational hierarchies. Today, business leaders place great emphasis on hiring the right people and keeping them engaged.

What is human resource management?

Human resource management involves creating personnel policies and procedures that support business objectives and strategic plans. Central to this mission is fostering a culture that reflects core values and empowers employees to be as productive as possible.

What are the functions of human resource management?

HR functions can vary depending on industry, businesses size, and the types of workers employed. In most cases, the primary objectives are to acquire and cultivate talent and improve communication and cooperation among workforce members. Other key human resource management functions include:

Job analysis

Determining the skills and experience necessary to perform a job well may make it easier to hire the right people, determine appropriate compensation and create training programs.

Workforce operations

Creating health and safety policies, responding to employee grievances, working with labor unions, etc., can help support regulatory compliance.

Performance measurement

Evaluating performance is important because it not only fosters employee growth through constructive feedback, but also serves as a guide for raises, promotions and dismissals.

Incentive programs

Recognizing achievements and rewarding high performers with bonuses and other perks is a proven way of motivating employees to take ownership of business objectives.

Professional development

From orientation to advanced educational programs, employee training serves to improve productivity, reduce turnover and minimize supervisory needs.

What are the responsibilities of human resource management?

HR professionals generally are tasked with creating and administering programs that improve workplace efficiency and employer-employee relationships. Within this broad assignment are several different, but critical responsibilities, such as:

Staffing

Staffing a business or an individual department requires a number of key steps. Hiring managers must first determine how many new employees the budget can support, then find and interview qualified candidates, and finally, make selections and negotiate compensation.

Developing workplace policies

If it's determined that a new or revised policy is needed, HR professionals typically consult with executives and other managers, write the supporting documentation and communicate it to employees. Policies may cover vacations, dress codes, disciplinary actions and other types of workplace protocol.

Administering pay and benefits

In order to attract and retain talent, compensation must meet industry standards and be comparable to what other employees in similar roles are being paid. Creating such a fair pay system requires careful consideration of an employee's years of service with the business, experience level, education and skills.

Retaining talent

Compensation isn't the only thing that retains talented employees. HR managers may need to proactively address issues with workplace environments, organizational culture and relationships between employees and supervisors.

Training employees

When employees develop new skills, they tend to be more productive and satisfied with their job. Some of the training programs typically run by HR departments include team-building activities, policy and ethics education, and on-the-job instruction and skills, e.g. how to run a machine or computer program.

Complying with regulations

Laws that affect the workplace – whether they're related to discrimination, health care or wages and hours – are constantly evolving. HR professionals are required to keep up with these changes and notify the rest of the organization in support of compliance.

Maintaining safety

Safety in the workplace means protecting not just the physical health of employees, but also their private information. To minimize workers' compensation claims and data breaches, HR must implement security measures and ensure that all federal, state and union standards are met.