Line Manager Challenges in Human Resource Development

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Line Manager Challenges
in Human Resource Development:
A Study of Hilton International's
UK Managers

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ABSTRACT. There is a range of challenges inherent in and surrounding line managers' involvement in human resource development, according to theoretical perspectives. At a conceptual level, the challenges include organisational commitment to human resource development; senior managers' understanding of training and development issues; and trust between line managers and human resource specialists. At a practical level the willingness and ability of line managers to carry out human resource tasks; organisational support; time pressures and workload are all challenges.

The aim of this article is to explore levels and types of line manager challenges in human resource development in the context of a branded international case organisation, Hilton International hotels. The empirical work is derived from a survey of 760 of Hilton International's UK

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line managers on their perceptions of, and involvement in, human resource activities. With a survey yield of 328 questionnaires, the Hilton work affords an in-depth analysis of the perspectives of line managers on their interface with human resource development. In particular, the analysis reveals high levels of senior manager understanding of training and development issues, very high levels of trust in human resource specialists and high levels of personal commitment to the human resource development activities. However, also evident are issues of conceptual understanding and responsibility for the service quality strategy that shapes human resource development activities, together with the importance senior managers attach to human resource development, and workload pressures. The respondent line managers themselves make suggestions, notably in the provision of training, to improve their involvement in human resource development within Hilton International hotels. *[Article copies available for a fee from The Haworth Document Delivery Service: 1-800-HAWORTH. E-mail address: <docdelivery@haworthpress.com> Website: <http://www.HaworthPress.com> © 2006 by The Haworth Press, Inc. All rights reserved.]*

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INTRODUCTION

Achieving and maintaining service quality in the competitive hotel industry is often a business necessity and imperative (Kandampully, 1997). Further, the relationship between corporate efforts on the one hand and local acceptance and execution on the other is of great importance in geographically disbursed yet branded hotel companies. Human resource practices can play a significant role in linking corporate service strategies to operational implementation (Maxwell, McDougall, & Blair, 2000). This article connects service quality strategy with human resource development (HRD). It explores the line manager challenges in HRD in the context of a branded international case organisation, Hilton International hotels. (Here, the line managers are operational managers in hotels–hotel managers, departmental managers, assistant managers and supervisors.) Its specific aim is to explore the different levels and types of challenges facing line managers as regards their involvement in HRD.

A great deal of management literature has focused on the nature of managerial work, what managers do and what managers should be doing.

Scarborough (1998) articulates two schools of thought on management. The first of these is the empiricist perspective, which attempts to address the question: What do managers do? This work is exemplified by studies of effective managers' roles and behaviour such as that undertaken by Mintzberg (1973), Kotter (1990) and Stewart (1979). These writers developed rich descriptions of managerial behaviours and practices, classified them according to the functions they perform, and proposed prescriptive theories of what managers should do. Probably the best known of these was Mintzberg's (1973) analysis of managerial work. The second school is the essentialist perspective that is characterised by the attempt to uncover the 'essence' of management and its relationship to the underlying functions that managers do, such as control over labour. This essentialism perspective has a long history and is underpinned by universalistic principles. Advocates of universalistic principles believe that a set of universally applicable management competence criteria and standards addressing management activities and behaviours can be developed, irrespective of functions or organisational settings (Training Agency, 1988). For example, Thomson, Stuart and Lindsay (1996) note that there has been much interest in the identification of a generic list of managerial competencies. They argue that comparisons between existing lists of managerial competence and overlaps support a belief in generic competence. However, various commentators such as Herriot (1988), Jacobs (1989) and Burgoyne (1989) have expressed concerns about the limitations and narrowness of the universal approach (Hamlin & Stewart, 1990). Irrespective of the perspective taken when examining the work of managers, the ability to exercise both technical expertise and management skills to identify and implement improvements is clearly imperative to operational success. Jacobs (1989) proposes that attention needs to be paid to the development of both systems and people in the operation (i.e., the 'hard' or technical aspects of management and the 'soft' or behavioural characteristics). In support of this, the McKinsey 7-S framework, initially developed by Peters and Waterman (1982), illustrates that organisational capability is influenced by the 'soft' elements of style, staffing, skills, and shared values, in addition to the traditional 'hard' areas of strategy, structure and systems (Fifield & Gilligan, 1997). This paper focuses on the importance of the soft skills of human resource development in line management. First, the nature of HRD is outlined as the foundation of the article, and then the line manager challenges in HRD are discussed theoretically. Thirdly, the empirical results of the case study work are discussed before key conclusions are drawn.

The Nature of Human Resource Development

Though human resource development (HRD) defies universal definition, it can be usefully conceived as "an umbrella term that incorporates processes which focus on learning, change and improvement at individual, group, organisation and societal levels" (Mankin, 2003, p. 5). From its relatively recent emergence as an academic discipline, HRD remains the subject of on-going debate and conceptual formulation. Garavan, Barnicle, and O'Suilleabhain (1999) acknowledge the progress of the discipline of HRD but nevertheless assert that "HRD as a concept, model, approach, discourse or set of practices remains unclear" (pp. 169). What are clearer, they assert, are some 11 dimensions of HRD that can be distilled from the literature. These dimensions can be loosely framed in conceptual, strategic and operational terms to shape understanding and expectations of contemporary HRD, as seen below.

TABLE 1. Dimensions of HRD

DIMENSIONS of HRD
Conceptual Dimensions
- the underpinning philosophy of HRD.
HRD is a social and discursive construct.
HRD is conceptualised as an investment in human resource capability rather than employment costs.
HRD views the employee in a "holistic" sense.
Strategic Dimensions
- links with organisational strategy.
HRD is intrinsically related to overall business strategy and competitive advantage.
HRD is concerned with how well HRD strategies are reinforced by and reinforce other HR strategies.
HRD is concerned with change at all levels.
HRD is concerned with organisational and individual learning.
Operational Dimensions
- the implementation of strategic dimensions.
HRD is concerned with identifying and enhancing the core competencies required at each level.
HRD focuses on the management and delivery of training activities within the organisation.
HRD concerns itself with selecting the best delivery systems designed to enhance human resource competencies.
HRD consists of a range of generic activities associated with learning.

Adapted from Gravavan et al., 1999.

Integral to HRD are line (operational) managers for contextual and organisational reasons (Garavan et al., 1999; Gibb, 2003; McCracken & Wallace, 2000). In the former category, factors such as globalisation, developments in IT, and consumer demands are cited; whilst the latter category factors, such as employee productivity, service innovation, skill shortages and competence development, have promoted the role of line managers in HRD. Heraty and Morley (1995) go as far as arguing that line managers are "key stakeholders" in HRD (pp. 31). However, there is currently modest "hard data" (Gibb, 2003)–empirical information–on line manager involvement in HRD (pp. 289). Thus this article's exploration of line manager challenges in human resource development contributes to insights into HRD in general.

Line Manager Challenges: Theoretical Perspectives

A range of challenges inherent in line manager involvement in HRD are highlighted in the literature. Broadly, these can be themed as conceptual and practical challenges. Taking conceptual challenges first, the following are important: line manager commitment to HRD; senior manager understanding of training and development issues; and trust between line managers and HR specialists. As a general observation, Heraty and Morley (1995) note that Storey (1992) contends that "managers who themselves received little education and training are less likely to recognise or approve the need for investment in the training of their subordinates" (pp. 35). Renwick and MacNeil (2002) express reservations about the willingness of line managers to conduct employee development tasks properly, suggesting that a lack of commitment can inhibit HRD. De Jong, Leenders and Thijissen (1999) take this point further in emphasising the importance of line managers demonstrating their commitment to HRD in acting as role models. These commentators also signal that senior managers should have an understanding of training and development issues for line managers to assume HRD responsibilities and tasks. For Garavan et al. (1993), the establishment of trust between line managers and HRD specialists is a significant challenge. Overarching these challenges is Thornhill and Saunder's (1998) contention that line managers' rejection of HR responsibilities generally impacts negatively on organisations. Therefore, surmounting conceptual barriers is important to organisational performance.

Turning to practical challenges, the following are important prerequisites to successful devolvement of HRD to line managers: line managers' ability to carry out HRD activities; demonstrable organisational support; and line manager training in HRD. Several commentators, including

Aston (1984), Brewster and Soderstrom (1994) and de Jong et al. (1999), make the point that a lack of training in HRD may reduce its priority for line managers. Demonstrating organisational support for HRD as a legitimate and valued organisational activity is argued by Heraty and Morley (1995) as being key to line managers' acceptance of HRD. This support could, for example, be expressed in treating training as an investment, as opposed to a cost, or comparing training and development expenditure to capital expenditure, as well as senior managers and directors attaching significance to HRD. It could also be manifest in providing line managers with training in carrying out their HRD role in order to overcome the challenge of lack of competence in training and development, noted as potential problems by Ashton (1984, as cited in Heraty & Morley, 1995), and Brewster and Soderstrom (1994). Additional challenges lie in line managers' preoccupation with short-term pressures (Tsui, 1987) and work overload (Brewster & Soderstrom, 1994).

Thus, before line managers can undertake HRD responsibilities and roles effectively, a range of challenges have to be overcome. De Jong et al. (1999) reinforce this position in their view that "delegation of HRD responsibility to first level managers turns out to be a feasible option providing certain conditions are met" (pp. 176).

Company Background

Hilton International's UK hotels, which between them employ around 15,000 people, are the context of the empirical work of this article. The aim of the primary work is to explore the levels and types of challenges facing line managers in their involvement in HRD. The primary work draws from a continuing, longitudinal case study of Hilton International's integrated, global quality service and HR strategies (Maxwell & Quail, 2002). This integrated strategy comprises Equilibrium and Esprit, which launched in the UK in 2001 for global adoption.

To differentiate Hilton service and meet Hilton customer needs, the brand new concept of "Hilton time" being "restorative" was developed. Putting this concept into practice means the implementation of a quality service strategy named 'Equilibrium.' Essentially, Equilibrium aims to ensure all Hilton customers experience a stay at/visit to Hilton that balances their wider life needs of work and leisure in a restorative way. Equilibrium is summed up within Hilton as "putting back in a little of what life takes out" and, importantly, is attuned to individual guests through "brand promises" of service standard. Thus, quality service depends heavily on employees, particularly those at the front line of customer contact. Hilton moments

are the points of customer-staff interaction when the member of staff is expected to attune his/her service offering to their perception of the individual customer's needs to achieve a sense of personal equilibrium. In short, the service quality initiative seeks to establish a service brand (Equilibrium) and service culture (Esprit/Hilton moments) with support from an HRM package of employment terms and conditions (Esprit).

Esprit is portrayed as being a concept of directing the way employees work. It is defined within Hilton as "a promise on how our colleagues are treated within the Company" (UK HR vice-president). It consists of a range of HR activities that are designed to ensure that employees are able to support the service quality initiative of Equilibrium: "a promise on how our guests are treated" (UK HR vice-president). Esprit has been designed to embrace the key principles of employee recognition, respect and reward. It "starts with recruitment but relies more on appropriate [employee] development. . . . Esprit training aims to change behaviours to deliver Hilton moments" (UK HR vice-president). Esprit training is based on technical and behavioural skills to support the identified brand standards and provision of Hilton moments. It is continuous to keep Equilibrium alive through training and team meetings. Upon successful completion of training, employees become members of Esprit entitling them to access rewards and incentives. Extra rewards can be given to employees who demonstrate excellent customer service. Hotels are provided with annual targets for Esprit membership numbers, and these are measured as part of the hotel's performance indicators, which can include a balance scorecard. Although Esprit was initiated by Hilton's corporate human resource department in the UK, Hilton perceives this initiative as being concerned with instilling a service culture throughout the organisation and believes this to be owned by all Hilton employees. That is to say, Esprit is a responsibility for each and every employee. Hotel managers, departmental managers, assistant managers and supervisors alike are all charged with responsibility for delivering Esprit, though in practice the hotel managers usually have less customer contact.

METHODOLOGY

Thus through Esprit, the case work affords a focus on line manager involvement in HR activities (Maxwell & Watson, 2004) and, the particular focus of this paper, on line manager challenges in HRD. Line managers' views on HRD challenges, as flagged up in the literature re-

view and in a series of interviews with the UK HR vice-president, were canvassed by questionnaire. The questionnaire comprised nominal, ordinal and open questions. Most questions included a five point Likert scale for reliability through consistent data collection.

An external market research organisation used by Hilton, a regional HR manager, and a hotel HR manager in Hilton approved the questionnaire by addressing content validity. The questionnaire was then piloted, for face validity, with ten self-selected managers in a Hilton hotel in Glasgow (Veal, 1997). Next, ten copies of the questionnaire were sent to the HR managers in each of the 71 Hilton hotels in the UK. Thereafter, they were completed on a self-selection, self-administered, anonymous basis to address response bias (Mitchell, 1996). The active response rate was 328 (43% of the 760 survey sample) across the line manager position as indicated in Table 2. The gender split is 43% male and 56% female, and 70% of respondents are 35 years of age or less. The respondents are geographically disbursed widely throughout the UK, and 71% of them had been with Hilton for more than one year at the time of questionnaire completion.

The questionnaire responses included 775 comments on the 11 questions inviting additional comments. A combination of quantitative and qualitative data reduction techniques, in descriptive statistics and content analysis, were used to interpret this primary data. The social sciences package of statistics (SPSS) was used for the management of the quantitative data. The qualitative data was reduced by categorising recurrent points arising in response to each question (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Some direct quotations of the managers' comments are included in the findings to illustrate and add depth to the collated responses.

On the backdrop of the shape of contemporary HRD outlined by Garavan et al. (1999), the results in terms of conceptual and practical challenges of line manager involvement in HRD are presented next.

TABLE 2. Profile of Respondents

Job titles	Percentage of respondents
Hotel managers (including deputy managers)	30%
Departmental managers/assistant managers	53%
Supervisors	9%

Line Manager Challenges: Empirical Findings

Background

HRD in Hilton–via Esprit–can be mapped to some of Garavan et al.'s (1999) dimensions of HRD. Conceptually, HRD is seen in the company as an investment in human resources capability rather than employment costs and considers the employee in a total, "holistic" sense, according to the UK HR vice-president. Strategically, HRD is intrinsically related to overall business strategy and competitive advantage in Equilibrium. Additionally it is concerned with organisational and individual learning. Operationally, HRD centres, through Esprit, on core competencies, the management and delivery of training activities, and a set of generic activities associated with learning. Each of these dimensions of HRD is reflected in the findings.

Conceptual Challenges

Conceptual challenges span commitment to HRD (Renwick & MacNeil, 2002); senior managers' understanding of training and development (de Jong et al., 1999); trust between line managers and HRD specialists (Garavan et al., 1993); and line managers acting as role models for HRD (de Jong et al., 1999). Each of these is outlined. Commitment to HRD can be reflected in line managers' perceptions of ownership of Esprit which, as explained, involves a significant HRD element. Table 3 below summarises these views.

TABLE 3. Ownership of Esprit

Locus	No. of respondents (n = 326)	% age of respondents
Hilton plc	227	69%
Employees	176	54%
Hotel human resources staff	103	31%
Departmental managers	98	30%
Head office human resources dept.	99	30%
Senior managers	74	23%
Hotels	72	22%
Other (than the responses above)	14	4%

Note: multiple responses were permitted.

In the main, ownership of Esprit is seen to lie with the company itself, with 69% of responses signalling this. Next, 54% of the respondent managers consider Esprit to be the responsibility of their employees. Fewer than half of them appear to recognise that managers themselves have responsibility for Esprit. Indeed, it is evident that managers perceive staff to have greater ownership of Esprit than they do, strongly suggesting some misunderstanding or lack of commitment or both. With 94% of respondent managers agreeing to varying extents that 'Esprit is fundamental to the success of Hilton,' it points to a misunderstanding on responsibility for Esprit. Two-thirds (67%) of the managers either agree or strongly agree with this statement compared to only 6% who disagree. Ten of the eleven qualitative comments on ownership centre on 'everyone' owning Esprit; one manager states: "It's a culture where everyone is involved." Though this mirrors Hilton's pitch on Esprit, it is clear a relatively modest number of managers appreciate the company line on locus of ownership.

As to opinions of senior managers' understanding of training and development issues, the overwhelming majority (97%) opine this is quite good to excellent, as is illustrated in Table 4 below. On a five point semantic scale where 5 is 'excellent,' the mean is 3.4–that is between 'good' and 'very good.' Most respondents rate the understanding as 'very good' (36%) or 'good' (38%). It is clear then that overall, the level of understanding is believed to be very high, encouraging line managers' involvement in HRD.

Similarly, a very high level of trust in the hotel HR managers is clearly evident. Ninety-four percent of the managers rate the hotel HR manager's role in supporting them to carry out Esprit activities as either 'essential,' 'very important,' or 'important.' A similar proportion (93%) rate the HR function in their hotel as 'excellent' to 'quite good,' and 86% of respondents either agree to some extent with a statement such as 'I trust the HR specialists in my unit.' Table 5 shows that the managers generally value

TABLE 4. Senior Managers' Understanding of Training and Development Issues

Rating	No. of respondents (n = 328)	% age of respondents
Excellent (5)	36	11%
Very good (4)	117	36%
Good (3)	124	38%
Quite good (2)	41	12%
Poor (1)	9	3%
Mean score 3.40		

TABLE 5. Views of Hotel HR Specialists

Statement	Range of 5 point response scale	No. of respondents (n = 328)	% age of respondents
[importance of] 'the hotel HR manager's role in supporting you in carrying out Esprit activities'	'essential' to 'unimportant'	308 across 'essential'/'very important'/ 'important'	94%
[rating of] 'the HR function in your hotel'	'excellent' to 'poor'	304 across 'excellent'/'very good'/'good'/ 'quite good'	93%
[rating of] 'your working relationship with the HR manager in your hotel'	'excellent' to 'poor'	312 across 'excellent'/'very good'/'good'/ 'quite good'	95%
'I trust the HR specialists in my hotel'	'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree'	280 across 'strongly agree'/ 'agree'/'partially agree'	86%

Note: This table is a composite of responses from questions with different semantic scales, as indicated in the 5 point response scale.

their HR managers' support, rate their performance and working relationship with them and, above all, trust them.

In contrast to a lack of commitment to HRD suggested in the responses to the question of ownership of Esprit detailed above, the survey findings point to the managers believing they act as positive role models for HRD. Ninety percent agree to some extent that they 'reflect the values of Esprit in [their] day-to-day role' and that they 'have responsibility for HR in [their] team.' Further, HRD activities undertaken by the manager respondents comprise:

- induction of new colleagues (66% of respondents);

- identification of training needs (85%);

- ensuring colleagues are available to participate in training and development activities (80%); and

- evaluating training (71%).

The majority of the comments offered in the questionnaire responses– some 214–focus on line managers' personal impacts on Esprit. Most (25) comments relate to positive role model effects in managerial attitudes and behaviours, for example one respondent notes his/her "pro-

motion of Esprit to ensure it's a key focus for staff and lives and breathes in the department." Other behavioural comments cluster around the managerial actions of encouragement, support, and communication of Esprit, strongly indicating acceptance of responsibility for HRD in Esprit. One respondent typifies this acceptance: "I've personally affected the impact of Esprit by explaining and demonstrating its values and benefits to all colleagues." The second most frequent category of responses (11) concern membership of the Esprit club, possibly reflecting again the misconceptions about ownership. The remainder of responses generally concern appraisal and ensuring training takes place. Of all 214 comments, only three are neutral or negative.

Thus, with the exception of ownership of Esprit, all the questionnaire findings indicate that the principal challenges to line manager commitment to and involvement in HRD activities have been surmounted. However, the exception of ownership of Esprit is conspicuous in the theme of conceptual challenges because it is the very foundation of HRD in Hilton.

Practical Challenges

The line manager practical challenges in HRDs', discussed earlier in the theoretical perspectives, consist of: line managers' ability to carry out HRD activities (Ashton, 1984 as cited in Heraty & Morley, 1995; Brewster & Soderstrom, 1994); organisational support (Heraty & Morley, 1995); time pressures (Tsui, 1987); and work overload (Brewster & Soderstrom, 1994).

Clearly, the first two of these challenges are connected as line managers' ability in HRD activities is derived from the organisational support afforded to them in this area. The ability of line managers to carry out HRD activities is indicated in the ways Hilton has helped them in delivering Esprit. Most help is in personal development and the provision of training material (61% of the respondents indicated these two factors). For fewer than half of the respondents, other factors are seen as helpful. These comprise maintaining the profile of Esprit, senior management encouragement, provision of training techniques and ideas, and administrative support, as illustrated in Table 6.

Consequently, it appears line managers feel they carry out HRD activities with a high degree of autonomy. This assertion is underlined by the finding that 86% of respondent managers believe that training would have supported them in delivering Esprit. In the context of some lack of conceptual understanding of the ownership of Esprit, such a finding is perhaps unsurprising. However, 95% of respondents now feel 'competent in supporting training and development in their department,' strongly suggesting that the

TABLE 6. Hilton Support Mechanisms for Delivery of HRD

Factor	No. of Respondents (n = 322)	% age of Respondents
Personal development (e.g., training delivery skills)	201	61%
Providing material (e.g., Esprit membership packs)	200	61%
Maintaining the profile of Esprit (e.g., newsletter)	149	45%
Senior management encouragement	139	42%
Techniques and ideas (e.g., best practice)	114	35%
Admin. support for Esprit	101	31%

Note: multiple responses were permitted.

line managers believe they have successfully risen to the challenge of carrying out HRD activities. Furthermore, 92% are comfortable with their coaching role. From the 155 comments associated with company support in delivering Esprit, organisational support seems to be a keen topic for line managers. This is especially so for departmental managers, supervisors and assistant managers in hotels who together make up 106 of the responses–the largest proportion. Of principal importance to this group is additional training on the meaning of Esprit for managers, particularly new managers. The following two managers' quotes are illuminating on the combined issues of understanding Esprit: "Training in the meaning of Esprit, more on the intranet/internal promotion of Esprit" and "Each manager you speak to has a different idea of what Esprit is about."

In addition, a total of 131 suggestions are offered to improve the delivery of Esprit. Ninety-one of these are proffered by departmental managers, supervisors and assistant managers, arguably informed by their high degree of self-development in this area, as noted earlier. Most frequently the suggestions relate to communication and information; possibly this is linked again to the conceptual understanding of Esprit ownership, and training in Esprit training; it may possibly be linked again to practical support in delivering Esprit. Succinctly underlining this contention are two respondents' quotes on the training line managers would like on Esprit, firstly in terms of understanding, and secondly in terms of training: "teach me about the meaning of Esprit" and "run training on the delivery methods of Esprit."

Additional indications of organisational support are evident in the line managers' perceptions of the importance senior managers attach to

HRD, presented in Table 7 below. Arguably these results, falling short of a 'very important' mean, do not reflect the total level of corporate support necessitated by the business strategy of Esprit. Certainly, they are less than the perceived level of significance unit management are considered to attach to HRD, which has a mean score of 4.2.

Short-term pressures and work overload too are intertwined. Both of these challenges are apparently manifest in Hilton with the majority of managers reporting that heavy workloads and short-term job pressures have limited their ability to support Esprit. Eighty-six percent of the managers 'often' or 'always' experience heavy workloads; and 78% 'often' or 'always' experience short term job pressures. At the same time, most managers feel they have effective time management skills, with 60% 'never' experiencing a lack of time management skills. The inference is that their jobs are demanding. In the light of this, their commitment to and involvement in HRD is laudable. Table 8 summarises views on the challenges of time pressures and work overload.

Thus, the questionnaire findings indicate that elements of the practical challenges in carrying out HRD activities exist for Hilton's line managers. The main challenges here appear to be senior management support and time/workloads exigencies. Nevertheless, the managers believe they are capable and successful in carrying out the HRD activities. However, significant numbers raise their preference for more training on Esprit.

CONCLUSIONS

The relatively new phenomenon of HRD can be theorised as comprising conceptual, strategic and operational dimensions for human resource specialists and line managers drawing from the work of Garavan et al. (1999).

TABLE 7. Importance Senior Managers Attach to HRD

Factor	Mean score on a 5 point rating scale from 'essential' (5) to 'unimportant' (1)	No. of respondents (n = 325) 'essential'/ 'very important'/ 'important'	% age of respondents
Significance attached to HRD by senior managers and directors at regional and head office level	3.91	303	92%
HRD expenditure compared with capital expenditure	3.73	296	90%

TABLE 8. Experience of Time Pressures and Work Loads

Factor	No. of respondents and frequency		% age of respondents
Short term job pressures	Always: 21 Often: 197 Never: 62	(n = 280)	8% 70% 22%
Lack of time management skills	Always: 4 Often: 94 Never: 145	(n = 243)	2% 39% 60%
Heavy workloads	Always: 54 Often: 212 Never: 43	(n = 309)	17% 69% 14%

The theory on HRD also presents a series of challenges for line managers. These challenges can be categorised as conceptual and practical challenges. Conceptual challenges include: commitment of line managers to HRD (Renwick & MacNeil, 2002); senior managers' understanding of training and development (de Jong et al. 1999); trust between line managers and HRD specialists (Garvan et al., 1993); and line managers acting as role models for HRD activities (de Jong et al. 1999). Practical challenges comprise: line managers' ability to carry out HRD activities (Ashton, 1984 as cited in Heraty & Morley, 1995); demonstrable organisational support for line managers carrying out HRD activities (Heraty & Morley, 1995); time pressures (Tsui, 1987); and work over load (Brewester & Soderstrom, 1994). Where service quality is important in geographically disbursed yet branded hotel companies, such as Hilton International hotels, it is critical that corporate service strategies are linked to operational implementation. Therefore, the case study of line manager challenges in HRD in Hilton International's UK hotels, as covered in this article, may prove instructive for the other regions in its global business that are adopting the Equilibrium service strategy and Esprit service culture.

In general, line managers in Hilton's UK hotels seem to embrace HRD positively and rise to the conceptual and practical challenges although the survey exposes where there is potential for improvement. Specific learning points for Hilton concentrate primarily on training and development of managers in both the meaning and delivery of Esprit. Secondly, they relate to the importance senior managers are perceived to attach to HRD through Esprit and reduction of workloads. Understanding of the meaning of and responsibility for Esprit is a crucial conceptual challenge. The delivery of Esprit, senior management support, and reduced workloads are more practical challenges. By improving in these areas and building on the very

strong relationships between line managers and hotel human resources specialists, there is the potential for Hilton to achieve greater levels of commitment to and involvement in HRD. Consequently, there is an opportunity for enhanced organisational performance through service quality.

The next stage of the Hilton case study is to survey hotel human resource specialists on their opinions on line manager involvement in HRD. Following recent completion of a series of face-to-face interviews with such specialists, a questionnaire is now primed for administration. Further research on line managers in HRD will add to insights on service quality strategy and the on-going debate on HRD.

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