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HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT – HRM7505-B
COURSEWORK ASSESSMENT

Topic: Question 2: *Employee engagement is a concept that helps organizations achieve their*

Objectives. Critically evaluate the purpose and principles (values) of human resource Development as a driver of employee engagement in John Lewis and Partners

Introduction

⁴ The concept of employee engagement within human resource principles is regarded as a way to make workers feel more attached to their roles. This attachment does not simply entail undertaking duties with due diligence but rather feeling passion and commitment towards the roles that let them care for the organisation. In short, this form of engagement can be determined as a discretionary effort that employees look to administer in favour of the company. In this essay, considering a vital part of the human resource objective for UK-based retailer John Lewis and Partners, the context of employee engagement that validates the human resource purpose will be critically evaluated in the essay. Moreover, any claims made and explanations sought will be supported by scholarly evidence.

Human resource objectives set by the organisation

There are multiple human resource objectives set by John Lewis and Partners that are primarily enforced to drive employee engagement within the company. Some of these objectives can be laid down in below manner.

Firstly, the retailer has been chiefly concerned with their lack of two-way communication between the management members and the employees. Also, with the 'them and us' attitude that managers possess many workers to become less pleased with continuous working in the organisation (MyCustomer, 2008). Therefore, John Lewis and Partners have decided to conduct regular employee surveys and gauge the psychological considerations that might drive down their productivity. Eventually leading them out of the enterprise.

Secondly, to constantly involve the staff members in more activities aside from being the voice of customers. This includes allowing the line staff to participate in the administration meetings and giving them a platform to share their ideas, information, and ways to cope with the process and sort out strategies. That enables the organisation to set these workers aside from being simple transactional workers, and instead converting themselves into insightful employees (MyCustomer, 2008). It enables the employees to provide solutions because their time, with the external and internal stakeholders usually takes long hours. Therefore, these workers are likely to have a better perspective, regarding what form of solutions can be fruitful in circumstances like the above.

Thirdly, it allows the employees to promote a philosophy followed by John Lewis and Partners, which allows the workers to participate in the heart of value proposition design.

This is known within the firm as the 'make and sell' approach, whereby executives keep in touch with the customers and ensure their smooth distribution of service. That takes place after the product has been selected, feature-related information sought, and taken up for the final transaction. Meanwhile, with each sale accomplished by the retailer, the customers must be a part of their corporate DNA-based practices. This creates camaraderie among the line staff members and the executive teams, along with the managerial staff.

Fourthly, to provide co-creation by communicating with the marketing and research department, which enables the retailer to build upon knowledge-sharing constituents. Each piece of knowledge acquainted by the executives, workers, and other line staff members gives perspectives to the departments in concern (MyCustomer, 2008). This gives a scope to continuously compare data extracted from the market, regarding beauty, homeware, hygiene,

and others. In a way, employees might indicate if the data carried by the department hold any long-term meaning for the company.

Finally, it allows the customer-facing staff to serve within the service design. In this case, John Lewis and Partners can advocate for the workers to serve more as consulting representatives from the management. Rather than wasting unaccountable hours towards unproductive tasks. Therefore, productive work can be used to a large extent and replace unproductive work. This can boost the goodwill of the company in front of the clients, and customers. It is also likely to keep the suppliers in a good position to continue with the company, rather than configuring aggressive pricing techniques.

Critical evaluation of purpose and principles of human resource development as a driver of employee engagement in the organisation

An important model for employee engagement is David Zinger's employee engagement framework. It emphasises the importance of employee needs, including well-being and meaningful work (Kocherlakota, 2017). That culminates in the contribution of results. There are generally three rows contained within the model, and in the case of John Lewis and Partners the 'building blocks' can be checked to allow a workplace to thrive.

Bottom Row: The necessities

Firstly, a key principle surrounding any human resource principles enforced by a company is ensuring physical and psychological requirements of the workers stay intact. Similarly, John Lewis and Partner's emphasis on health and well-being has not been their primary factor to consider for boosting engagement. Even if the organisation was among the first to offer a healthcare program under the auspices of NHS or National Health Service. Initially, there were limited interventions, aside from 700 companies willing to assist workers by creating a network around John Lewis (Webber, 2020). However, before the pandemic, the organisation increased the importance of ensuring workers can be on their feet at all times. This allowed reduction of an average of 190,000 days from a year due to ill health. The company also managed to provide cognitive behavioural therapy for their employees and decided to insure 75% of the employees who fell under major illnesses.

Secondly, the retailer felt it better to take opinions from leaders who might ascertain the requirements of workers that ensured continued attention towards critical tasks carried out within the company. It allowed the employee-owned retail organisations to announce a £500 one-off payment for full-time efforts. A pro-rata amount was also considered for the part-time workers. At least 4% of entry-level pay was also increased for newcomers. This was mainly

deemed necessary by the leader, who also determined that if the organisation did not show financial support to their assets then support for partners and suppliers can wean over time (Donnelly, 2022). However, the main CEO Sharon White added that one-off payment systems will still be in place for 76000 other workers. That will be excluding a 2% hike through a bonus (Donnelly, 2022). However, many workers are of the mind that the company might forego their claims instead of granting them in the long run.

Thirdly, the retailer considers fresh talent, who might collaborate with existing experienced staff members. As a result, the group has released a proposal also known as 'Future Partnership' that might create cost-savings of at least £100 million. It will axe 75 members within the senior management that has 225 other members, and provide a new role structure for staff members initialising staff consultation as well (Clark, 2019). The above initiative is likely going to streamline the functions within the IT department, and other operations. That will ensure that John Lewis and Partners, along with its sister supermarket chain of Waitrose, runs under a single chain rather than separately. Thus, another human resource principle of the organisation is granting adequate leeway to the workers for thriving in their positions.

Second Row: Uniting the company

Firstly, a feature among human resource principles is an effective team working, and this is prioritised by the retailer. Its purpose is carried out when 69000 permanent workers are invested in online and physical cataloguing, providing direct services for checking out, and allowing customers to be familiarised with products (Iqbal, 2012). This cannot be performed by a single executive and the collaboration of other temporary workers and management heads. However, during the performance, the activity is not rooted in the tasks at hand and is seen only in principle. That is because the company wants to put in a place a governance system that would function both commercially and competitively. This allowed every partner or employee within the company to voice their concerns regarding business decisions, and combine their commercial acumen to help the company succeed. It can be both profitable and through the accumulation of clientele (Iqbal, 2012). There still exist many workers who are confused about the approach.

Secondly, John Lewis and Partners have decided to work on their employee recognition factor, for improving engagement practices. For instance, ⁵ all non-management-based partners, and first-level managers excelling in their work performance in a month will likely receive £25 per week. Also, as a form of partnership discount, the employees can shop in Waitrose stores with an average discount increased from 15% to 25%. The discount stays at 20% after the pandemic period surpasses (Insightdiy.co.uk, 2020). The organisation will also decidedly hike their non-

management partner's weekly pay by 11%, followed by a 2% hike in their bonus figures. Other childcare-related costs would also be granted to the employees after their performance within a period is evaluated (Insightdiy.co.uk, 2020). Certain employees within the organisation have raised an issue with the firm, indicating that such hikes at the start of the year will likely slow down any future increments. This prospect has remained unanswered by the retailer.

Thirdly, another key factor to invigorate the impact of engagement, classifying as an innovative human resource principle serving a purpose. John Lewis and Partners try to engage their employees to participate in creative work programs. For instance, four young creative workers were recently allowed to diversify the 'Made in UK' slogans. Under this program, the employees try to explore the reasons for going British in contemporary working environments which also lets them understand the authenticity towards celebrating this feat. Also, another campaign that the retailer managed to sponsor was 'Create Not Hate', following the death of George Floyd (Ormsher, 2023). This supported the ideology that young talents might remain unrecognised because their educational needs from being young are not realised. Therefore, the organisation tried to stir the sentiments of such young talents and ensured their experienced workers engaged with them continuously. That created prolonged sessions, which were worth its weight.

Third Row: Boosting Performance

Firstly, the organisation managed to tackle the challenge long plaguing them in terms of lacking revenue from the online markets. However, by managing to increase employee productivity, the organisation allowed its workers to help those customers who could not find the right sizes and colours in terms of clothing. Several technical advisors were hired by the firm, who underwent different forms of training (Cesário and Chambel, 2017). This allowed them to flourish when the tasks were at hand. It resulted in a 15% increase in online sales, adding revenue of £1.5 million and improving partner satisfaction. Meanwhile, many staff members of the company indicated that they required a better flexible learning platform. This allowed the company to provide these workers with a self-paced learning program, whereby the employees might be able to access materials and participate in activities whenever they felt less occupied (Hrgrapevine.com, 2019). Also, the learning and development team of the company created a digital guide, which allowed the apprehensive learners within the programs to participate through multi-team approaches. The company can thus develop a holistic solution by keeping the customer at heart, and also provide different challenges to its executive employees at different junctures of their learning cycle.

Secondly, the annual staff surveys conducted by the retailer, show that executives handling devices for aiding customers during checkouts are happy overall. However, the company's perspective on classroom-based learning for its employees is yet to become a centrally driven function (Hrgrapevine.com, 2019). This creates detachment among the leader, away from taking ownership of the learning. Thus, it might become a reason for reducing employee engagement to a large extent within the organisation of John Lewis and Partners.

Another theory that can justify principles serving its purpose for increasing employee engagement within the company of John Lewis and Partners is the 'human capital theory'. Developed in the year 1960, economists Gary Becker and Theodore Schultz identified that education and training were important facets that increased labour productivity in a firm (Brintseva, 2019). As more and more physical capital was accumulated, the opportunity cost for workers diminished over time. This brought into focus the conceptualisation of what human capital entailed, beyond acting as an intangible economic value of workers' experiences and skills. Through qualities of better education, training, and learning, employers might create discipline among employees through loyalty and punctuality. This factor thus separates human capital theory apart from the rest.

As the human capital theory is considered by social scientists to designate personal attributes, that serve its usefulness in production. To drive a similar employee engagement, John Lewis and Partners have been renowned to provide immersive learning. Recently, the company managed to create an online training course that might allow the staff members to reduce their energy consumption, energy use, and carbon emissions within their homes and their lives (Sedgley and Elmslie, 2018). The course is being delivered by the retailer encompassing both Waitrose and John Lewis, as they both pledged a net zero initiative till the year 2035. The company also engaged the Energy institute for rolling out an energy-aware behaviour. This enabled the retailer to form an energy supply contract with ENGIE and allow the workers to engage together in the initiative for ensuring the company's energy usage, related costs, and carbon emissions are controlled over time. It might have felt like a far-sighted investment made by the retailer, that helped them accelerate their net zero initiative. Also, the above program equipped over 76000 people to undertake informed decisions (Hutchins, 2022). That can impact their everyday lives both at home and at work. The above processes produced staff behavioural changes to a large extent and pinpointed measures to allow the business in undergoing cost-savings. However, as soon as the workforce started getting busier by involving themselves in the tasks. The process turned out to be complicated in the context of the organisation, as limited interventions were in place that can pull the employees back to

complete their learnings (Hutchins, 2022). This created many workers who had partial training and lacked the appropriate skillsets that would aid them in multi-tasking by applying themselves in designated roles. The employees faced difficulty in isolating themselves from taking decisions, and at the same time managing consumers while going back to the drawing boards for understanding learning perspectives. This was entirely lacking in terms of commitment within the company, as staff members had lesser time to apply themselves in their roles. It accosted some loyal customers of the company with their time. Hence, John Lewis and Partners will require a better training and learning development program in the future. That will better suit the workers and provide them with the flexibility to continue creating the required productivity.

Conclusion

This essay concludes that employee engagement prospects within John Lewis and Partners were focused on maximising the performance of the workers, rewarding these workers through valuable benefits, and fostering recognition along with using their strengths for decision-making. The more workers managed to continue providing productivity, the more workers managed to emphasise connecting the client value with the management value. It was likely that the firm would create employee engagement. However, there still existed a gap in the learning and development practices enforced by the retailer. This generally creates a wider dilemma disallowing the employees to keep striving for the contribution of values. Moreover, the retailer needs to work on this department and continuously improve themselves if they want to keep the same levels of employee engagement.

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