Information Note

Basic Elements in a Human Resource System

This information note offers a series of check lists and questions which can be used as a diagnostic tool when reviewing and planning the basic elements of an HR System.

1. Organisational Structure:

Organisational structure refers to the way the organisation is designed to divide work, share information, make decisions and achieve goals.

a) Is the organisational organogram available to all staff members?
b) Is it accurate and up-to-date? When was it last updated?
c) Is the structure suitable for enabling the programme to implement its strategy?
d) Does it clarify management / communication lines?

2. Job Design:

Job design is the process by which new jobs are created to carry out specific roles in the organisation or existing jobs are modified to meet more effectively the requirements of the organisation.

a) How are existing jobs designed?
b) Have existing jobs been analysed recently?
c) Have recent developments in job design been taken into account (e.g. key performance areas?)
d) Does job design take account of issues arising from strategy plans in relation to ways of working?
e) Are management roles designed to be "doable" with realistic spans of control?

3. Job Descriptions:

Job descriptions are formal documents that specify the accountabilities and responsibilities of a particular job and describe the skills, knowledge, attitudes and experience of a suitable post-holder for that job.

a) Do they exist for every job?
b) Are they up-to-date and accurate?

c) Is the format appropriate (does it follow the organisation's guidelines)?
d) Do they have performance standards/key result areas?
e) Do they include common core areas as well as specifics e.g. documentation, sharing learning etc

4. Recruitment Policy:

A recruitment policy is an official statement of the purpose, values and principles of staff recruitment in an organisation, which all staff are expected to follow.

a) Is there a local policy for recruitment?
b) Are the responsibilities and accountabilities clear?
c) Is the policy appropriate to the needs of the programme and the 'market'?
d) Is adequate training provided to those involved in recruitment and selection e.g. interview skills?

5. Recruitment Procedures:

An official statement of the detailed process and practices which all staff are expected to follow in the recruitment of new staff.

a) Is there appropriate documentation?
b) How is the use of any procedures encouraged?
c) Are responsibilities clear and understood?
d) Is there a detailing of minimum requirements for the post?
e) Is there adequate use of various selection methods and assessment tools?
f) Are there suitable standard letters for the various stages?
g) How long do recruitment procedures take (start to finish)?
h) What are the average recruitment costs?
i) Are the procedures followed?
j) What problems are encountered in recruitment?

6. Staff Induction to the organisation:

Induction is the final stage of the recruitment process. It is a learning process through which new employees are welcomed into the into an

organisation by finding out about the structure, functions, roles and responsibilities, norms, rules and procedures of the organisation. One of the key purposes of induction is to enable the person to play an active role in carrying out their responsibilities as soon as possible after they start employment

a) Is there an established procedure?
b) Are there suitable induction materials?
c) Are there mechanisms to ensure that new employees are automatically included in induction activities?
d) Are some elements mandatory for all employees and some appropriate for certain groups only?
e) Is there sufficient accountability for induction?
f) Who does the induction, or the various elements of it?
g) How useful is the current induction?
h) How could the present system of induction be improved?

7. Staff Induction to the job:

A process where managers work with individuals and teams to achieve work objectives through joint planning, problem solving, monitoring and evaluation.

a) How is the individual induction designed?
b) Who should design it and what should it cover?
c) Does it prepare the employee to be able to make a contribution swiftly?
d) Is there a working supervision system?
e) What methods are used for supervision?
f) Who is responsible for record keeping and how is this done?
g) How is it evaluated?

8. Staff Review:

Staff review (sometimes called appraisal) is the process of ensuring that each staff member:

- Regularly receives feedback on their performance and the progress they have made towards achieving planned objectives;
- Agrees objectives and plans for the next year with their supervisor;
- Identifies, with their supervisor, needs for support, learning and development;
- Has a regular opportunity to plan for their career development.

a) Is there a working system?
b) What approach is used and do staff feel some ownership of the process?
c) What is the perceived purpose?
d) What recording system is used?

e) Is the documentation adequate and not overly cumbersome?
f) Is there sufficient information?
g) Are the review meetings handled well enough? (Time to prepare, allowance of enough time for meeting)
h) Does staff review relate to job descriptions?
i) What mechanisms are used for follow-up?
j) How is the timing linked to planning activities and the planning/budget cycle?
k) Are managers provided with adequate training to have high quality and honest conversations on performance?
l) How is the process monitored and the quality evaluated?

9. Career Path Planning:

The process of providing support and guidance to staff to enable them to make longer-term plans for their future employability, and to develop internal talent pool of skills and experience for future roles.

a) Do staff members have an opportunity to discuss their career plans?
b) Do staff know of and actively participate in this process?
c) Are staff given help with CV development?
d) What problems are encountered in career development?
e) How could the process be improved?
f) Are routes into and out of particular functions or types of work clear and the skills that employees need to develop?
g) Does the organisation know which are its critical roles and the career map towards these
h) Does the organisation acknowledge and accept that some career planning may lead to staff exiting if actual opportunities are not forthcoming at the right moment for in their personal career development? However, individuals may equally rejoin after a period elsewhere with enhanced experience and skills.

10. Training And Staff Development:

The process of ensuring that staff have adequate opportunities to:

- Understand and be committed to what the organisation is trying to achieve;
- Take responsibility for their own learning and continuous development;
- Work with staff, partners and beneficiaries in ways which promote learning and participation;
- Assess, plan and review work to increase effectiveness and achieve high standards;

- Manage financial and other resources effectively and demonstrate accountability;
- Learn from experience and share the lessons inside and outside the organisation.
- Improve their performance and that of others.

a) How are training/development needs analysis done?
b) Are training programmes related to individual, team, and organisational needs or a combination of all three?
c) How equal is access to training and development opportunities?
d) How is follow-up carried out?
e) What records are kept?
f) What evaluation methods are used (of impact on the learner as well as quality of activities)?
g) Is there suitable accountability for ensuring that needs are met?
h) Is the budget adequate?
i) Are external as well as internal trainers used for training?
j) What role do managers play in the training and development of their staff?

11. Management Development:

Management development is a planned learning process designed to improve managerial effectiveness.

a) Has the desired management culture been clearly articulated
b) How will it support organisational delivery?
c) Is it clear what is expected of managers – skills and behaviours?
d) Has current managerial capability been assessed – gap analysis?
e) What experience is there of management development in the past? Is there any learning form this?
f) Who has access to management development opportunities – Senior Managers, identified talent, everyone?
g) How is planning for management development carried out both at the individual and organisational level?
h) How are individual needs analysed?
i) How are cross-cultural issues taken into account?
j) What range of learning activities will be offered?
k) What performance monitoring and support will be provided?
l) Is management development activity an integral part of the talent management/succession management strategy?
m) Are steps taken to manage personal career development expectations in line

with the reality of potential vacancies available?

12. Reward:

The systems and procedures which determine staff grading, salaries and other benefits which are part of the conditions of service for staff. Many organisations view pay and benefits within the context of total reward which also includes the range of inputs that make up the overall employment proposition i.e. learning and development, career development, environment and working patterns etc.

a) Is there a set of reward principles which link back to the organisation's culture, values and mission and against which reward system and decisions can be measured?
b) Is there a reward philosophy to guide reward system design e.g. market positioning, pay progression mechanism, flexibility to different labour markets?
c) Is there a grading and salaries policy?
d) Is there an objective system of job evaluation to measure internal relativities and support internal equity
e) Are external relativities understood and measured to ensure competitive salaries – i.e. pay market benchmarking
f) What other non-financial benefits are provided (e.g. loans, health care)?
g) Is there adequate flexibility to recognise the needs of different groups e.g. international relocation packages?
h) Are salary administration arrangement robust e.g. new starters, annual salary review implementation, one off payment, accurate and timely payslips etc?

13. Human Resources Function And Budget:

The systems, resources and procedures which create a framework for the fair and effective management of staff.

a) Who has responsibility for the overall management of the human resource systems?
b) Are enough resources devoted to human resource management?
c) Is there representation of the human resources function on the senior management team or the board?
d) What is the level of awareness among managers of human resource management?
e) Who controls the budget for human resources?

14. Human Resource Planning:

The process of:
- Determining the human resource needs of the organisation;
- Ensuring that the organisation creates the correct number and type of jobs to meet these needs;
- Recruiting the right skills, knowledge and attitudes and for developing existing staff to ensure that the organisation can achieve both its current objectives and its longer-term strategic goals.

a) How suitable is the current level of staffing and overall skills profile?
b) What forecasting techniques for future staff needs and skills profile are being used?
c) Is there a clear relationship between country, regional and organisational strategy planning?
d) What constraints exist in achieving desirable levels and skills of staffing?

15. Staff Personal Records:

The system of records on all aspects of staffing.

a) What information is kept in staff records?
b) How complete are staff records?
c) Is the format suitable (including language used)?
d) What use is made of staff records?
e) Who has access to staff records?
f) How are records kept – paper-based or computerised?
g) Are relevant data protection requirements adhered to – for example the storage and transfer of data?

16. Organisational Culture:

The term used to describe the outward signs of the values, beliefs, norms and habitual 'way of doing things' of an organisation.

a) What type of culture prevails in the organisation?
b) How well is the culture serving what the organisation is trying to achieve?
c) Is there a clear vision of what sort of culture would best serve the organisation and its mission?
d) Do people management interventions support and promote desired cultural attributes or conflict with them eg how performance is managed, what is recognised and rewarded, who has access to learning and development opportunities, does excessive use of short term contracts undermine loyalty and longevity?
e) How does the culture differ internationally?

17. Planning And Managing Change:

Change is a fact of life, and no organisation can afford to ignore it without jeopardising its existence. The effectiveness of any organisation will depend on how well it identifies the need and opportunities for change and manages them to help achieve its overall goals.

a) What experience has there been of managing major change initiatives (e.g. restructuring)?
b) Is HR involved/consulted in change management, especially when there is an impact on staff
c) Have managers had specific training in dealing with and/or leading change?

18. Job Satisfaction and employee engagement:

a) What mechanisms exist for measurement of job satisfaction and engagement?
b) What level of identification or engagement with the organisation is there among staff?

- Engaged employees work with passion and feel a profound connection to their company. They drive innovation and move the organization forward.
- Not engaged employees are essentially "checked out." They're sleepwalking through their work day, putting time—not energy or passion—into their work.
- Actively disengaged employees aren't just unhappy at work: they're busy acting out their unhappiness. Every day, these workers undermine what their engaged co-workers accomplish.

Source: Adapted from "Engaged employees inspire company innovation." (2006, October 12). Gallup Management Journal, http://gmj.gallup.com

c) What are current levels of job satisfaction among staff?
d) What are the causes of satisfaction or dissatisfaction among staff? Does this differ in different cultures?
e) Questions to determine employee engagement:

1. Do you know what is expected of you at work?
2. Do you have the materials and equipment you need to do your work right?
3. At work, do you have the opportunity to do what you do best every day?
4. In the last seven days, have you received recognition or praise for doing good work?

5. Does your supervisor, or someone at work, seem to care about you as a person?

6. Is there someone at work who encourages your development?

7. At work, do your opinions seem to count?

8. Does the mission/purpose of your company make you feel your job is important?

9. Are your associates (fellow employees) committed to doing quality work?

10. Do you have a best friend at work?

11. In the last six months, has someone at work talked to you about your progress?

12. In the past year, have you had opportunities at work to learn and grow?

Source: Copyright © 1993 – 1998 The Gallup Organization,
Washington, D.C. All rights reserved.

    f) Ways that engagement can be maintained or improved?

- Create objective and inclusive performance management systems.
- Provide key developmental experiences.
- Offer mentoring and networking opportunities.
- Create an inclusive work environment:
- Provide equal opportunities.
- Educate the workforce about diversity and inclusion.
- Broaden the acceptable leadership styles for both women and men.
- Guard against reverse discrimination.
- Address work/life needs:
- Reduce expectations of very long work hours.
- Provide role models.
- Rethink career paths.
- Support involvement in activities outside of work.

Source: Adapted from Galinksy, E., Salmond, K., Bond, J. T., Brumit, Kropf, M., Moore, M., & Harrington, B. (2003). Leaders in a global economy: A study of executive women and men. *New York: Families and Work Institute, Catalyst and The Center for Work & Family.*

19. Information Sharing And Communication:

In order to function effectively, any organisation must ensure that staff have access to the information they require in the right form, at the right time. This requires mechanisms for coordination, communication, problem solving and feedback.

a) What mechanisms are there for sharing information and encouraging communication and cross-functional and cross-regional working between staff (individually and in groups/teams)?

b) How adequate are the mechanisms for information sharing?

c) How is information about key organisational and programme documents shared and who is responsible?

d) What are the main gaps in information sharing?

20. Staff Relations:

Sometimes referred to as employee relations (ER) this refers to the formal relations which exist between staff and their managers in an organisation.

a) What is the staff relations atmosphere and record like?

b) Who has accountability in the organisation for staff relations?

c) How adequate are procedures for grievances and discipline and management of capability or poor performance?

d) Is there a staff association or trade union and, if so, what role does it play?

21. Staff Health:

Employers have both a legal liability and a duty of care to fulfil in ensuring a healthy workplace and workforce. Providing a staff health programme as part of a 'reward' or 'benefit' package is one way to achieve this.

a) Are there appropriate health programmes for staff?

b) Equity between international and local?

c) What is the coverage of health programmes?

d) Are employees' computer practices healthy (e.g. work station, breaks from VDUs)?

e) Who is responsible for health checks, training etc?

22. Staff Safety And Security:

Employers have a responsibility to ensure, as far as is possible, the safety and security of their staff in the performance of their duties.

a) Are there any procedures for staff safety (vehicles, accidents, fire, earthquake, and so on)?

b) Who has accountability for staff safety training and awareness?

c) What is the safety record like?

d) Are there procedures for ensuring the security of staff during civil disturbances and other emergency procedures (e.g. flood or earthquake)?

e) Are all staff aware of the policies in place and what to do in an emergency?
f) Is non-compliance with health, safety and security policy potentially a disciplinary issue?

23. Metrics Gathered:

Gathering and monitoring data on staffing issues can help identify or clarify problem areas, understand the needs of staff, and assist in HR Planning activity.

a) Does the organisation have metrics on such things as staff turnover, absenteeism, internal promotion / external recruitment ratio, salary as a proportion of project cost, etc?
b) What do these metrics reveal?
c) Is the staff complement as diverse as the organisation would wish it to be?
d) How do these metrics compare with other NG0s?

24. Retrenchment Practices:

This refers to the reduction of staffing by planned termination of employment.
a) What policies does the organisation have on termination of staff employment?
b) Are exit interviews conducted? If so, how is the information used?

25. Social Interaction:

Encouragement and facilities provided to staff to meet informally and develop relations.

a) Is there a staff newsletter?
b) Are social gatherings of staff organised through work?
c) Are they accessible to all staff?
d) What social or recreational facilities does the organisation provide, if any?