

list of qualified small businesses, and reporting to Congress on the results of the program. As of May 31, 2005, 12,983 firms were HUBZone-certified. To qualify as a HUBZone contractor, a small business must meet the following criteria: it must be a small business according to SBA size standards; it must have a principal office located in a HUBZone; it must be owned or controlled by U.S. citizens; and at least 35 percent of its employees must be HUBZone residents. If any of a firm's locations meet these standards, then the entire company is eligible for HUBZone status.

HUBZone contracts are awarded in three principal ways. When more than one qualified HUBZone business is expected to submit a bid, then the contract is awarded competitively at a fair market price. If only one qualified HUBZone business submits a bid, that business can receive a sole source contract at a fair price. In some situations, contracts are awarded via a full and open competition in which qualified HUBZone businesses receive a preference if their bid is less than 10 percent higher than those of other bidders.

In addition to preferences in securing federal contracts, HUBZone businesses also can qualify for higher SBA guaranteed surety bonds on contract bids. In cases where the HUBZone is also designated as a federal Empowerment Zone/Enterprise Community, small businesses may also qualify for other tax credits and deductions. To find out more about the HUBZone program, see the Small Business Administration Web site at <http://www.sba.gov/hubzone>.

SEE ALSO 8(a) Programs; Empowerment Zones

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HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Human Resource Management (HRM) is the term used to describe formal systems devised for the management of people within an organization. The responsibilities of a

human resource manager fall into three major areas: staffing, employee compensation and benefits, and defining/designing work. Essentially, the purpose of HRM is to maximize the productivity of an organization by optimizing the effectiveness of its employees. This mandate is unlikely to change in any fundamental way, despite the ever-increasing pace of change in the business world. As Edward L. Gubman observed in the *Journal of Business Strategy*, "the basic mission of human resources will always be to acquire, develop, and retain talent; align the workforce with the business; and be an excellent contributor to the business. Those three challenges will never change."

Until fairly recently, an organization's human resources department was often consigned to lower rungs of the corporate hierarchy, despite the fact that its mandate is to replenish and nourish what is often cited—legitimately—as an organization's greatest resource, its work force. But in recent years recognition of the importance of human resources management to a company's overall health has grown dramatically. This recognition of the importance of HRM extends to small businesses, for while they do not generally have the same volume of human resources requirements as do larger organizations, they too face personnel management issues that can have a decisive impact on business health. As Irving Burstiner commented in *The Small Business Handbook*, "Hiring the right people—and training them well—can often mean the difference between scratching out the barest of livelihoods and steady business growth. . . . Personnel problems do not discriminate between small and big business. You find them in all businesses, regardless of size."

PRINCIPLES OF HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Business consultants note that modern human resource management is guided by several overriding principles. Perhaps the paramount principle is a simple recognition that human resources are the most important assets of an organization; a business cannot be successful without effectively managing this resource. Another important principle, articulated by Michael Armstrong in his book *A Handbook of Human Resource Management*, is that business success "is most likely to be achieved if the personnel policies and procedures of the enterprise are closely linked with, and make a major contribution to, the achievement of corporate objectives and strategic plans." A third guiding principle, similar in scope, holds that it is the HR's responsibility to find, secure, guide, and develop employees whose talents and desires are compatible with the operating needs and future goals of the company. Other HRM factors that shape corporate culture—whether by encouraging integration and cooperation across the company, instituting quantitative

performance measurements, or taking some other action—are also commonly cited as key components in business success. HRM, summarized Armstrong, “is a strategic approach to the acquisition, motivation, development and management of the organization’s human resources. It is devoted to shaping an appropriate corporate culture, and introducing programs which reflect and support the core values of the enterprise and ensure its success.”

POSITION AND STRUCTURE OF HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Human resource department responsibilities can be subdivided into three areas: individual, organizational, and career. Individual management entails helping employees identify their strengths and weaknesses; correct their shortcomings; and make their best contribution to the enterprise. These duties are carried out through a variety of activities such as performance reviews, training, and testing. Organizational development, meanwhile, focuses on fostering a successful system that maximizes human (and other) resources as part of larger business strategies. This important duty also includes the creation and maintenance of a change program, which allows the organization to respond to evolving outside and internal influences. Finally, there is the responsibility of managing career development. This entails matching individuals with the most suitable jobs and career paths within the organization.

Human resource management functions are ideally positioned near the theoretic center of the organization, with access to all areas of the business. Since the HRM department or manager is charged with managing the productivity and development of workers at all levels, human resource personnel should have access to—and the support of—key decision makers. In addition, the HRM department should be situated in such a way that it is able to communicate effectively with all areas of the company.

HRM structures vary widely from business to business, shaped by the type, size, and governing philosophies of the organization that they serve. But most organizations organize HRM functions around the clusters of people to be helped—they conduct recruiting, administrative, and other duties in a central location. Different employee development groups for each department are necessary to train and develop employees in specialized areas, such as sales, engineering, marketing, or executive education. In contrast, some HRM departments are completely independent and are organized purely by function. The same training department, for example, serves all divisions of the organization.

In recent years, however, observers have cited a decided trend toward fundamental reassessments of human resources structures and positions. “A cascade of changing business conditions, changing organizational structures, and changing leadership has been forcing human resource departments to alter their perspectives on their role and function almost overnight,” wrote John Johnston in *Business Quarterly*. “Previously, companies structured themselves on a centralized and compartmentalized basis—head office, marketing, manufacturing, shipping, etc. They now seek to decentralize and to integrate their operations, developing cross-functional teams. . . . Today, senior management expects HR to move beyond its traditional, compartmentalized ‘bunker’ approach to a more integrated, decentralized support function.” Given this change in expectations, Johnston noted that “an increasingly common trend in human resources is to decentralize the HR function and make it accountable to specific line management. This increases the likelihood that HR is viewed and included as an integral part of the business process, similar to its marketing, finance, and operations counterparts. However, HR will retain a centralized functional relationship in areas where specialized expertise is truly required,” such as compensation and recruitment responsibilities.

HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT—KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

Human resource management is concerned with the development of both individuals and the organization in which they operate. HRM, then, is engaged not only in securing and developing the talents of individual workers, but also in implementing programs that enhance communication and cooperation between those individual workers in order to nurture organizational development.

The primary responsibilities associated with human resource management include: job analysis and staffing, organization and utilization of work force, measurement and appraisal of work force performance, implementation of reward systems for employees, professional development of workers, and maintenance of work force.

Job analysis consists of determining—often with the help of other company areas—the nature and responsibilities of various employment positions. This can encompass determination of the skills and experiences necessary to adequately perform in a position, identification of job and industry trends, and anticipation of future employment levels and skill requirements. “Job analysis is the cornerstone of HRM practice because it provides valid information about jobs that is used to hire and promote people, establish wages, determine training needs, and make other important HRM decisions,”

stated Thomas S. Bateman and Carl P. Zeithaml in *Management: Function and Strategy*. Staffing, meanwhile, is the actual process of managing the flow of personnel into, within (through transfers and promotions), and out of an organization. Once the recruiting part of the staffing process has been completed, selection is accomplished through job postings, interviews, reference checks, testing, and other tools.

Organization, utilization, and maintenance of a company's work force is another key function of HRM. This involves designing an organizational framework that makes maximum use of an enterprise's human resources and establishing systems of communication that help the organization operate in a unified manner. Other responsibilities in this area include safety and health and worker-management relations. Human resource maintenance activities related to safety and health usually entail compliance with federal laws that protect employees from hazards in the workplace. These regulations are handed down from several federal agencies, including the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and various state agencies, which implement laws in the realms of worker's compensation, employee protection, and other areas. Maintenance tasks related to worker-management relations primarily entail: working with labor unions; handling grievances related to misconduct, such as theft or sexual harassment; and devising communication systems to foster cooperation and a shared sense of mission among employees.

Performance appraisal is the practice of assessing employee job performance and providing feedback to those employees about both positive and negative aspects of their performance. Performance measurements are very important both for the organization and the individual, for they are the primary data used in determining salary increases, promotions, and, in the case of workers who perform unsatisfactorily, dismissal.

Reward systems are typically managed by HR areas as well. This aspect of human resource management is very important, for it is the mechanism by which organizations provide their workers with rewards for past achievements and incentives for high performance in the future. It is also the mechanism by which organizations address problems within their work force, through institution of disciplinary measures. Aligning the work force with company goals, stated Gubman, "requires offering workers an employment relationship that motivates them to take ownership of the business plan."

Employee development and training is another vital responsibility of HR personnel. HR is responsible for researching an organization's training needs, and for initiating and evaluating employee development pro-

grams designed to address those needs. These training programs can range from orientation programs, which are designed to acclimate new hires to the company, to ambitious education programs intended to familiarize workers with a new software system.

"After getting the right talent into the organization," wrote Gubman, "the second traditional challenge to human resources is to align the workforce with the business—to constantly build the capacity of the workforce to execute the business plan." This is done through performance appraisals, training, and other activities. In the realm of performance appraisal, HRM professionals must devise uniform appraisal standards, develop review techniques, train managers to administer the appraisals, and then evaluate and follow up on the effectiveness of performance reviews. They must also tie the appraisal process into compensation and incentive strategies, and work to ensure that federal regulations are observed.

Responsibilities associated with training and development activities, meanwhile, include the determination, design, execution, and analysis of educational programs. The HRM professional should be aware of the fundamentals of learning and motivation, and must carefully design and monitor training and development programs that benefit the overall organization as well as the individual. The importance of this aspect of a business's operation can hardly be overstated. As Roberts, Seldon, and Roberts indicated in *Human Resources Management*, "the quality of employees and their development through training and education are major factors in determining long-term profitability of a small business.... Research has shown specific benefits that a small business receives from training and developing its workers, including: increased productivity; reduced employee turnover; increased efficiency resulting in financial gains; [and] decreased need for supervision."

Meaningful contributions to business processes are increasingly recognized as within the purview of active human resource management practices. Of course, human resource managers have always contributed to overall business processes in certain respects—by disseminating guidelines for and monitoring employee behavior, for instance, or ensuring that the organization is obeying worker-related regulatory guidelines. Now, increasing numbers of businesses are incorporating human resource managers into other business processes as well. In the past, human resource managers were cast in a support role in which their thoughts on cost/benefit justifications and other operational aspects of the business were rarely solicited. But as Johnston noted, the changing character of business structures and the marketplace are making it increasingly necessary for business owners and executives to pay greater attention to the

human resource aspects of operation: “Tasks that were once neatly slotted into well-defined and narrow job descriptions have given way to broad job descriptions or role definitions. In some cases, completely new work relationships have developed; telecommuting, permanent part-time roles and outsourcing major non-strategic functions are becoming more frequent.” All of these changes, which human resource managers are heavily involved in, are important factors in shaping business performance.

THE CHANGING FIELD OF HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

In recent years, several business trends have had a significant impact on the broad field of HRM. Chief among them was new technologies. These new technologies, particularly in the areas of electronic communication and information dissemination and retrieval, have dramatically altered the business landscape. Satellite communications, computers and networking systems, fax machines, and other devices have all facilitated change in the ways in which businesses interact with each other and their workers. Telecommuting, for instance, has become a very popular option for many workers, and HRM professionals have had to develop new guidelines for this emerging subset of employees.

Changes in organizational structure have also influenced the changing face of human resource management. Continued erosion in manufacturing industries in the United States and other nations, coupled with the rise in service industries in those countries, have changed the workplace, as has the decline in union representation in many industries (these two trends, in fact, are commonly viewed as interrelated). In addition, organizational philosophies have undergone change. Many companies have scrapped or adjusted their traditional, hierarchical organizational structures in favor of flatter management structures. HRM experts note that this shift in responsibility brought with it a need to reassess job descriptions, appraisal systems, and other elements of personnel management.

A third change factor has been accelerating market globalization. This phenomenon has served to increase competition for both customers and jobs. The latter development enabled some businesses to demand higher performances from their employees while holding the line on compensation. Other factors that have changed the nature of HRM in recent years include new management and operational theories like Total Quality Management (TQM), rapidly changing demographics, and changes in health insurance and federal and state employment legislation.

SMALL BUSINESS AND HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

A small business’s human resource management needs are not of the same size or complexity of those of a large firm. Nonetheless, even a business that carries only two or three employees faces important personnel management issues. Indeed, the stakes are very high in the world of small business when it comes to employee recruitment and management. No business wants an employee who is lazy or incompetent or dishonest. But a small business with a work force of half a dozen people will be hurt far more by such an employee than will a company with a work force that numbers in the hundreds (or thousands). Nonetheless, “most small business employers have no formal training in how to make hiring decisions,” noted Jill A. Rossiter in *Human Resources: Mastering Your Small Business*. “Most have no real sense of the time it takes nor the costs involved. All they know is that they need help in the form of a ‘good’ sales manager, a ‘good’ secretary, a ‘good’ welder, and so on. And they know they need someone they can work with, who is willing to put in the time to learn the business and do the job. It sounds simple, but it isn’t.”

Before hiring a new employee, the small business owner should weigh several considerations. The first step the small business owner should take when pondering an expansion of employee payroll is to honestly assess the status of the organization itself. Are current employees being utilized appropriately? Are current production methods effective? Can the needs of the business be met through an arrangement with an outside contractor or some other means? Are you, as the owner, spending your time appropriately? As Rossiter noted, “any personnel change should be considered an opportunity for rethinking your organizational structure.”

Small businesses also need to match the talents of prospective employees with the company’s needs. Efforts to manage this can be accomplished in a much more effective fashion if the small business owner devotes energy to defining the job and actively taking part in the recruitment process. But the human resource management task does not end with the creation of a detailed job description and the selection of a suitable employee. Indeed, the hiring process marks the beginning of HRM for the small business owner.

Small business consultants strongly urge even the most modest of business enterprises to implement and document policies regarding human resource issues. “Few small enterprises can afford even a fledgling personnel department during the first few years of business operation,” acknowledged Burstiner. “Nevertheless, a large mass of personnel forms and data generally accumulates rather rapidly from the very beginning. To hold

problems to a minimum, specific personnel policies should be established as early as possible. These become useful guides in all areas: recruitment and selection, compensation plan and employee benefits, training, promotions and terminations, and the like.” Depending on the nature of the business enterprise (and the owner’s own comfort zone), the owner can even involve his employees in this endeavor. In any case, a carefully considered employee handbook or personnel manual can be an invaluable tool in ensuring that the small business owner and his or her employees are on the same page. Moreover, a written record can lend a small business some protection in the event that its management or operating procedures are questioned in the legal arena.

Some small business owners also need to consider training and other development needs in managing their enterprise’s employees. The need for such educational supplements can range dramatically. A bakery owner, for instance, may not need to devote much of his resources to employee training, but a firm that provides electrical wiring services to commercial clients may need to implement a system of continuing education for its workers in order to remain viable.

Finally, the small business owner needs to establish and maintain a productive working atmosphere for his or her work force. Employees are far more likely to be productive assets to your company if they feel that they are treated fairly. The small business owner who clearly communicates personal expectations and company goals, provides adequate compensation, offers meaningful opportunities for career advancement, anticipates work force training and developmental needs, and provides meaningful feedback to his or her employees is far more likely to be successful than the owner who is neglectful in any of these areas.

SEE ALSO *Employee Benefits; Employee Compensation; Employee Manual*

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HUMAN RESOURCE POLICIES

Human resource policies are the formal rules and guidelines that businesses put in place to hire, train, assess, and reward the members of their workforce. These policies, when organized and disseminated in an easily used form, can serve to preempt many misunderstandings between employees and employers about their rights and obligations in the business place. It is tempting, as a new small business owner, to focus on the concerns of the business at hand, and put off the task of writing up a human resource policy. All business analysts and employment lawyers will advise a new business owner to get a policy down on paper, even if it is a simple one drafted from a boilerplate model. Having policies written is important so that it is clear to all what the policies are and that they are applied consistently and fairly across the organization. Moreover, when issues concerning employee rights and company policies come before federal and state courts, it is standard practice to assume that the company’s human resource policies, whether written or verbal, are a part of an employment contract between the employee and the company. Without clearly written policies, the company is at a disadvantage.

Small businesses—and especially business start-ups—can not afford to fritter away valuable time and resources on drawn-out policy disputes or potentially expensive lawsuits. Having a human resource policy in place from the start can help to avoid this situation. The business owner who takes the time to establish sound, comprehensive human resource policies will be far better equipped to succeed over the long run than the business owner who deals with each policy decision as it erupts. The latter ad hoc style is much more likely to produce inconsistent, uninformed, and legally questionable decisions that may cripple an otherwise prosperous business. For as many small business consultants state, human resource policies that are inconsistently applied or based on faulty or incomplete data will almost inevitably result