

## **2013-2014 HCMS Scholarship**

### **Question:**

**What can be done to secure the future for HR practitioners by taking into account such important factors like change, sustainability and growth?**

### **Champion**

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Nowadays, the role of HR keeps changing because of many influences. From the impact of globalization, changing of the knowledgeable society and labour market to the new development in a company, HR practitioners have to be proactive in coping with all these changes. They should keep learning, be proactive and be strategic.

### **Keep Learning**

HR needs to be open-minded and love learning. Not only limited to the areas of HR skills and knowledge, HR has to learn as much as they can in any new changes and new things in the world. Learning about the industry, company's competitions to the pending legislations affecting the business, and so forth are all important for HR practitioner to get prepared for. There is no doubt that HR practitioners are not usually welcome in the executive board, as HR is often regarded as speaking different language comparing to the people in the Board. This may due to the weak knowledge on the company business and development of HR practitioners. Therefore, HR has to follow closely to the company development, be knowledgeable and develop analytical thinking and numerical sense. These are very important to help HR sustain an important role to the company development.

To keep up with the development of the company, one core issue for HR practitioners is to learn how to manage diversity. Diversity is being emphasized in many organizations, but it is hard to manage. HR should engage business leaders in the benefits of diversity and at the same time to fight for the resources that makes diversity success. Under the impact of globalization, it is inevitably a trend for business to grow geographically with remote workforce from worldwide. From hiring and recruiting the talents to training and offering an attractive benefits packages, all involve enough HR strategic involvement. To better cope with the company market expansion, learning how to manage diverse workforce, and to effectively manage people at distance is very crucial for HR to secure their important role. Apart from managing geographic diversity, HR needs to learn how to manage the generational diversity. HR should contribute their expertise in helping the older generation to transfer knowledge to the younger, so as to help company to have sustainable growth.

### **Be strategic**

It is also important for HR practitioners to reposition themselves from in-house “workers” to strategic partners of the top management team. This is especially true when businesses are using better technology and more self-service so that traditional functions of HR are shrinking. Regardless of the changes in the form of business, the combination of workforce in a company is also changing. With the increasing labour cost, especially after the enactment of statutory minimum wage, more employers choose to outsource part of their business functions. Companies also replace full-time positions by recruiting more part-time or temporary staff. All these changes will further threaten the role of in-house HR. Therefore, HR has to put more emphasis on their role in business planning and their strategic value in managing people as well as recruiting and retaining tactful employees.

Under the fast changing work environment, HR needs to show their strategic value to the company and how they can help the company grow. We should no longer be the workers in the company that follows the trends, but to be strategically involved in the managerial decision. It is commonly agreed that HR executives need to examine the broader strategic issues by applying their HR expertise. For instances, in facing all the government legislations, such as minimum wage and standard work time hours, HR should play a more strategic role in helping company to react to the changes.

**Be proactive**

HR needs to get ahead of the trend. Apart from learning new things, the reaction of HR should also be fast and even one step ahead. Facing the issues of declining birth rates, shortage of labour supply, and the increase in labour cost, HR should not be reactive to the changes only. HR needs to be proactive and take a step ahead of the problem. For example in handling the pending legislation such as the Standard Working Hours, HR should examine in details and communicate the respective strategies in facing the increase of labour cost under the impact of legislation. It is also essential for HR to act as a bridge between employers and employees, to understand their worries and formulate balanced policy that satisfies both of their needs. Proactively managing a good labour relation is also important in today's society, when Trade Unions are getting stronger and stronger these days. Labour strike can easily be elevated as a public strike, just like the dock strike in 2013. Thus, being proactive to employees' concern is essential not only to enhance job satisfaction, but also to secure the company reputation.

In conclusion, being reactive workers in a company should no longer be the identity of HR practitioners. In fact, HR should become a proactive managerial staff of the company under the changing environment. In order to prepare HR for entering the executive Board and to secure an important HR role in the company, keep learning is the first very essential step. Learning regarding the management of diversity is especially important in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Moreover, HR should communicate more on their strategic role as being the strategic partner of the company. Lastly, being proactive to issues such as changes in the work environment and government that have impact on the operation of the company is also very essential. Being a HR practitioner, it is important to get prepared to be an essential strategic partner of the company. It is time for HR practitioners to be prepared and to secure the bright future ahead.