

## **2015-2016 HCMS Scholarship**

### **Question:**

**Hong Kong's competitiveness hinges on its abilities to meet the demand for highly productive and creative human capital. It is believed that we have no shortage of diligent, productive and creative human capital to a great extent. How then our HR practitioners can help in managing our human capital to achieve their aspirations and unleash their full potentials so that they can further advance Hong Kong's competitiveness for the benefits of the corporation and community at large?**

**1<sup>st</sup> Runner Up  
Ms Emily Liu  
The University of Hong Kong**

### **Introduction**

People are the most valued asset of every organization, regardless of its size and function. By maximizing the potentials of their talents, businesses could have a greater chance to succeed. Hence, training and development has become the key objective of a lot of HR managers in Hong Kong. Focusing on

the current situation of Hong Kong, this article would first explore the human resource management dilemma in the city. It would then suggest several modernized training and development approaches that HR practitioners in Hong Kong that could be used to unleash the potentials of the younger generation. Some management challenges and suggestions would be discussed.

### **Situation and Dilemma**

Hong Kong, one of the Four Asian Tigers, is the world's leading financial centre. The working population in Hong Kong is composed of divergent backgrounds. The working age population crosses three generations - the traditionalist Baby Boomers, the independent generation X and the young cyber-age Millennials. Each of the generations have very different working experiences and motivation at work. The vibrant human capital demands considerably large management efforts.

Accommodating three world's top 100 universities with the population of 7 million, Hong Kong is equipped to train good quality human capital. By 2014, nearly 30% of the population received post-secondary education, and it is predicted that the percentage will increase in coming years. Paradoxically, Hong Kong is struggling with further advancing its competitive advantage. Furthermore, since the city is expected to experience depopulation and aging population soon, the workforce in Hong Kong would shrink, hence, competitiveness is likely to decline. The situation worries HR practitioners.

### **Training and Development Approaches**

How could HR managers unleash the potentials of the current workforce? Traditional training such as educational workshop remains important in Hong Kong. However, training and development should evolve along with societal development. HR managers should update their development approach to cater their staff's demands. Diversify training opportunities to unleash and develop the full potentials of their employees could be the answer to the question. In this session, several modernized training and development approaches would be introduced.

### ***Gamification***

Online gaming is a huge trend in Asian cities. HR managers could implement online games in their training process to cater the younger generations, who

tend to opt for a fast and easy, yet fun and fruitful training session. Indeed, the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) has identified gamification as one of the most significant technological trends among HR practitioners. A lot of big corporations have included gaming in their employee training and development schemes.

Encouraging the utilization of technology in human resource management could change the training session. With information system, the results of gamification could be easily collected and analyzed. Moreover, as most of the latest gamification could be done online, it provides a more flexible and interactive training option for both the employees and the HR practitioners. This approach is especially suitable for Hong Kong, where online games are popular among youngsters. The fun approach could help HR practitioners in re-engaging with the employees and motivate them to work, hence, to unleash their potentials.

### ***Career Development***

Modern employees seek for career development in jobs to build up their professional profile. By delivering fruitful personal and professional advancement to employees, it could enhance staff entitlement with the firm while advancing corporate competitiveness. Therefore, HR practitioners should not only think of the short-term needs of the individuals, but also the long-term development plans for their staff. A good human resource management approach should consider the future career planning of their employees.

HR managers could encourage employees to take on challenges, new projects and positions, so that they would have a better understanding of their capabilities. Project rotations could be the solution to managers. Graduate trainee programmes are increasingly common in big corporations and the positions are popular among young talents in Hong Kong. Moreover, HR managers could consider innovative methods. For example, Pricewaterhouse Coopers (PwC) uses gamification in their hiring and employee retention schemes.

### ***Overseas Working Opportunity***

International exposure is increasingly important in the age of globalization. To sustain the competitiveness of Hong Kong, which claims itself to be the “Asia’s

World City”, overseas working opportunity could be part of the human capital development scheme. It could be costly to send staff overseas, yet, the benefits outweigh the costs.

Advantages of promoting international exposure to employees include:

1. Improve social skills - especially problem solving abilities in complex situations within the organization or during company events.
2. Broaden the vision - for example, to understand professional knowledge that are developed in other countries.
3. Encourage talent retention - since international exposure could enhance personal development, which are attractive to employees.

Remedies of compensating the overseas working opportunity costs include inviting overseas businesses to cooperate with the corporation, and to ensure each team has a good mix of nationalities and backgrounds.

### **Other Related Management Issues**

Implementation of strategy is a challenging task for HR practitioners. While there are some innovative approaches to unleash the potentials of talents in Hong Kong, HR managers should be aware of the following issues.

#### ***The Generation Gap***

HR managers should be aware of the differentiated needs between generations when designing training programmes. The diverse workforce in Hong Kong demands different career prospectus. The Baby Boomers, who are experienced, need trainings on technological knowledge; while the Digital Natives, who are fresh graduates, require more exposure in determining their career path.

The abovementioned modernized training and development approaches cater the young generation better. They are passionate, willing to explore career opportunities, and skillful in technology. In contrast, to train the older generation, traditional approaches such as workshops may be more suitable because they are likely to be unfamiliar with new technologies.

#### ***Efficient Allocation and Effective Talent Selection***

Since resources are scarce, the limited number of training opportunities should be allocated to the most capable individuals. The first step of talent

development should be matching the employees to the suitable training opportunity. Traditionally, HR managers scan the resumes of employees to understand their strengths and weaknesses. It is a time-consuming, boring and inefficient process for HR managers. Fortunately, technological advancement generates easier and competent solutions for HR practitioners.

With the aid of advanced technology, human resource management software could eliminate the time in identifying the most suitable candidate. In the media age of 21<sup>st</sup> century, online resources provide convenient and valuable recruiting materials for all Human Resource practitioners. Trends in social media websites provide a good guideline in the popular topic among the community. For example, LinkedIn, a popular business-oriented social networking website helps employee to develop their own profile. It allows individual to categorize themselves according to their professional abilities and strengths. Information systems assist HR managers to select suitable candidates with limited amount of physical resources and time.

### ***Talent Retention***

Talent retention becomes a challenging priority for a lot of HR managers in the competitive corporate environment in Hong Kong. A stand-out human resource management strategy could develop a friendly branding in the marketplace, which helps attract talents and strengthens their sense of belonging with the corporation. This can contribute to talent retention. The stronger the employer brand, the better the productivity and value could the staffs deliver.

Motivations of each employee are unique, yet, there are several directions for HR managers to look onto. For example, by promoting a good organizational culture helps improve employee satisfaction at work. Career acceleration opportunities motivate employees to develop themselves both personally and professionally. HR practitioners could ensure employees share mutual goals with the organization in delivering corporate value and competitive advantages.

### ***Legal Issues***

Beyond the ordinary work scope, HR practitioners could try lobbying the government to establish a better working environment for employees. Legalization of work-life balance has been increasingly debated among policy makers in Hong Kong. In order to attract more foreign talents to start their

career in Hong Kong, the HKSAR government could consider legalizing the standard working hours to improve working condition in Hong Kong.

### **Insights and Conclusion**

HR practitioners should revisit and evaluate the management issues from time to time.

Going online and utilizing information technology is becoming a huge trend for human resource management. The strategy suits the young generation in Hong Kong, who uses online technology such as social media websites on a frequent basis. It helps engaging and building good relationship with employees while aspiring them to unleash their potentials. Moreover, in the age of globalization, HR managers should focus not only on the opportunities in the city, but to allow international insights to navigate their talent management.

Above all, and most importantly, there is no single approach that could fit the concerns and demands of all organizations. HR practitioners should be aware of the differentiate concerns between their employees. HR managers should assess the interests and employee profiles before implementing any management approaches. For example, traditional workshop could be more suitable in the engineering firm than a fashion design company.

### **References**

1. Critchley, B. (2001). *Managing Generation Gaps: Tips for Generation-Xers Responsible for Managing Older Workers*. Retrieved from <http://www.hr.com/SITEFORUM?&t=/Default/gateway&i=1116423256281&application=story&active=no&ParentID=1119278050447&StoryID=1119643516500&xref=https%3A//www.google.com.hk/>
2. Hong Kong SAR Government. (2014). *Hong Kong: The Facts*. Retrieved from <http://www.gov.hk/en/about/abouthk/factsheets/docs/population.pdf>
3. Keegan, B. (2013). *Top 5 Issues will Impact Hong Kong Employment in 2013*. Retrieved from <http://hongkongbusiness.hk/hr-education/commentary/top-5-issues-will-impact-hong-kong-employment-in-2013>

4. Robert Walters. (n.d.). *International Exposure is Good for Career Development*. Retrieved from <https://www.robertwalters-usa.com/career-advice/international-exposure-is-good-for-career-development.html>
5. The HR Specialist. (2014) *Game On! How HR can Use “Gamification” to Recruit, Train and Engage Employees*. Retrieved from <http://www.businessmanagementdaily.com/37753/game-on-how-hr-can-use-gamification-to-recruit-train-and-engage-employees>