

Human Resource Management

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Question

Human resource managers should always avoid adopting the soft human resource management approach while adopting the hard human resource management approach because the two approaches have opposing principles. Discuss.

Answer

Introduction

Human resource management is an important function across all business sectors that helps organizations handle human resource issues strategically. Coupling soft human resource management and hard human resource management allows human resource managers to achieve organizational goals effectively (Francis & Clifford 2019). Werner (2014) maintains that effective human resource management should apply hard human resources management in recruitment, selection compensation, contract negotiations, and performance evaluation. On the other hand, soft human resource management should be applied in conflict management, organizational development, organizational culture, and human resource development. Rather than seeing the two as antithetic, human resource managers should embrace the two and apply each where it fits well.

The soft human resource management approach

Soft human resource management is an indispensable approach to human resource management which asserts that employees are one of the most important assets of the company. Human resource managers who adopt the soft human resource management approach understand that subordinates are an essential asset that can tremendously enhance business success if fairly and properly treated. Therefore, human resource managers that subscribe to the soft human resource management approach tend to integrate employees' needs into long-term business strategies. Soft human resource management is effective in different ways, as discussed below:

Soft human resource management encourages two-way communication within an organization between managers and subordinates. Managers who follow soft human resource management principles promote employee participation in decision-making and execution of business plans. These managers encourage their subordinates to share their opinions and experiences regarding

organizational goals. More so, they encourage their subordinates to provide them feedback regarding meeting organizational goals. Employees, therefore, feel important, realizing that without their ideas, and input organizations struggle a great deal to achieve organizational goals (Cook, Mackenzie, & Forder, 2016).

The soft human resource management approach asserts that delegation develops employees' skills. Employees are motivated by assuming managerial roles even for a temporary period. Thus, delegation cements trust between managers and subordinates and can also develop and sharpen employees' skills. No employee would want to disappoint, especially when tasks have been properly delegated. Soft human resource management promotes delegation of tasks, developing employees' skills and improving employee performance (Armstrong, 2006; Werner, 2014).

The soft human resource management approach focuses on addressing employees' needs and giving employees some value (Werner, 2014). According to Cook *et al.* (2016), employees work for a reward (monetary or non-monetary); they work to get something. Soft human resource management allows managers to motivate their subordinates using various distinct ways. Some managers use non-monetary rewards, some managers use monetary rewards, and others use both to motivate their subordinates. Motivated employees are highly productive and self-committed. These two products of employee motivation are an enormous benefit to the organization.

A soft human resource management approach minimizes workplace conflicts. The approach also helps managers effectively resolve workplace conflicts when they arise. Managers who subscribe to the soft human resource management approach are open-minded. In addressing workplace conflicts, managers need to listen to the involved parties rather than making assumptions and working from prejudices. The soft human resource management approach makes the work environment conducive to all (Werner, 2014).

The soft human resource management approach is framed upon the principles of democratic leadership (Francis & Clifford, 2019). According to Cook *et al.* (2016), employees are allowed and encouraged to express themselves as they deem appropriate. If an employee is not happy about their remuneration, they have all the freedom to express their concerns. If they disagree with management in terms of policies and other issues, they also can express themselves.

Through creating a democratic environment, soft human resource management forces management to be creative, be ethical, and go the extra mile in terms of being open-minded.

The hard human resource management approach

The soft human resource management approach has its weaknesses which include delaying decision-making in synthesizing employees' opinions. However, managers can also adopt the hard human resource management to compensate for the weaknesses of the soft human resource management approach. Armstrong (2016) points out that hard human resource management is a staff management system that views employees as a resource that needs to be controlled to achieve competitive advantage and high profits. The hard human resource management places much focus on quick decision-making. There are certain issues in any organization that managers should address using the hard human resource management approach.

While properly rewarding employees is a good practice, there are certain circumstances when an organization decides to temporarily cut employees' salaries and allowances. For instance, in times of crisis, drastic negative changes in market demand may force an organization to adjust employee rewards. Such a decision can help an organization cut costs and survive while finding new ways to bounce back. The hard human resource management approach entails that organizations should use labor effectively and also at minimum cost. More so, organizations, in times of crisis, should not incur unnecessary costs such as performance-based rewards (Francis & Clifford, 2019).

The hard human resource management approach bends towards autocratic leadership (Werner, 2014). According to Cook *et al.* (2019) there are certain circumstances (crisis is one of them) that call managers to act without consulting their subordinates. Managers should not hesitate to adopt hard human resource management approach where there is a need to make quick decisions. What is essential is achieving organizational goals effectively; thus, achieving business goals does not always mean consulting employees in each situation.

Conclusion

In a nutshell, human resource managers can adopt both hard human resource management and soft human resource management in implementing and enhancing human resource management strategies. Each of the two approaches makes a significant contribution to ensuring impactful

human resource management strategies. That said, each of the two discussed approaches has its own flaws and cracks. Therefore, instead of adopting and relying on one of the two approaches, human resource managers should embrace and merge the two to ensure effective implementation of human resource management strategies. When the two approaches are combined, each approach compensates for the weaknesses of the other.

References

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