

When less is more-minimalistic HR

Author: Milton Jack . November 2019

Organisations are slowly buying into the realisation that HR is doing too much and that the list of *HR initiatives* is far too long. Behind this thinking is the notion that what employees and management are really looking for is *more impact, with less effort*. Employees and management are of the view that *HR* tends to make things complicated.

Research done by Kulik and Perry (2018) explored the possibility that devolving people?management activities to line managers might transform an HR unit and improve its reputation within its organization. They examined the effect of *devolving people?management* responsibilities to line managers on HR managers' construed image—their perceptions of the *internal reputation* of the HR unit. Results revealed that a devolution strategy had a positive effect on HR managers' perceptions of their unit's reputation among line managers and that this effect was partially mediated by changes in the HR function. Specifically, *devolution* increased HR's involvement in the operation of business units and in the organization's strategic planning. In turn, this change in *HR's strategic role* resulted in a more positive construed image for members of the HR unit.

Below are some of the ways to keep it simple in HR:

1. Keep your HR team small

Organisations should have small corporate teams all with *A-players*, with the ability to get high-quality work done. Such small teams with capable personnel perform such that when one looks at the accomplished results, it looks like the team is a lot bigger yet it's a team made up of a few driven employees. The tendency in most organisations is that most bosses or managers would like to meet and brainstorm with their teams resulting in spending more time in meetings. Often one of the outcomes of these meetings is more work for the *corporate HR team*. These meetings result in the HR team not being able to do real work, and as the requests for HR increase, they have to hire new people into the HR team. Unfortunately, research shows that the output of the team does not increase. More time will be spent on-boarding the new people, and in meetings, where the head has to communicate the outcomes of the meetings with the senior team. Team fun will decrease, as team members will no longer be the agile innovative team that can get things done. Thus organisations should always hire *A-players*, keep teams small, and don't waste too much time in meetings.

2. Invest in HR Tech and other apps

Organisations should invest in *HR tech and systems* that will contain all the relevant HR information of their applicants and employees. These HR Systems should be able to produce concise HR-reports, support with *predictive analytics*, and drive all the *HR workflows* such as *performance management*,

talent identification, and *succession management*. This dramatically simplifies procedures and processes in organisations. However, for most HR teams especially in developing countries such as Zimbabwe, this is still a dream as most organisations do not see the need to invest in some simple and focused solutions that make their life easier. There are numerous apps and systems that can help Zimbabwean organisations to simplify their operations. These include *iPerform* and *talent hunter*.

3. Stay close to the most urgent business issues

Strategy is more about today than about the future. Organisations should ask themselves: What are the most burning business issues that need to be tackled today? Do we have the right people leading our most important strategic programs? Is our top talent thrilled by the opportunities they are working on? How can we increase our capabilities in the region and abroad? Often HR and management are somewhat afraid to tackle the most burning issues, and this is where delaying tactics come in handy. Organisation XYZ, for example, needs more evidence before it can replace manager A. Even better: it needs a better performance management system so that we can better evaluate all managers, including manager A. It also requires a talent management system and a global opportunity system, so that it can match talent with opportunities. XYZ also needs a regional relocation policy, before it can move people into the region. All good thoughts, but delaying action. Action can often be taken today, and *HR* should push for action and have no tolerance for delay. If organisations are to focus on the most *urgent business issues*, their life will be simpler.

WHEN LESS IS MORE

MINIMALISTIC HR

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