

The Political Role of Corporate Human Resource Management in Strategic Global Leadership Development

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This article provides a description of the necessity for Human Resource Management (HRM) to change and expand its role in global organizations. The authors describe the reasons for this by emphasizing the political influences and strategies that are currently needed for global leadership development. Further, they address the need for HRM to participate in easing the transfer of knowledge across borders, and the urgency to strengthen the link between global leadership and teamwork with the firm's outcome, reputation, and competitiveness.

The authors indicate that the increased need for global leadership and the development of new practices of trust and communication among global assignees creates a stronger demand for the Human Resource Management (HRM) in global companies to adapt its policies to better fit global networks and to change the more traditional administrative image it has connoted in the past. The urgency for the change in HRM prevails because, despite its benefits, the older, traditional strategic models of HRM fail to participate in certain key areas that could be helpful to global organizations; for instance, defining the venues of influences that HRM policies might have on global leadership or on the firm's reputation. Thus, in order to attempt to answer these questions, the authors complement the more traditional framework with a political influence perspective.

Research has shown that in global organizations, the HRM political influences are useful in mitigating possible competing interests of employees, including potential discussions over the decision criteria of candidates for global leadership programs, or arguments over performance evaluation systems, the subsidiaries and compensation methods for international assignees, and finally by helping to mediate between the competing interests of a manager's upward career mobility. Moreover, in addition, to easing the various competing interests and views that occur in a global firm, the HRM should expand its abilities to focus on how global leadership can contribute to the firm's reputation.

Formerly, HRM has faced barriers when it comes to having an influence on this issue because, in the past, HR managers have been left out of helping to make major global strategic decisions. Another problem is that, previously it was viewed that HRM only made its decisions in hindsight. Thus, in order for the firm to better benefit from the corporate HRM influence, the traditional role of the HRM image must change from the narrow, technical administration of standards to an image of being a proactive political power and effective, strategic force.

Another potentially significant contribution, which could improve a global firm's reputation and competitiveness could be achieved by enhancing the HRM ability to influence global leadership; beginning with finding a way to attract, retain and develop a good mix of candidates for global

leadership development programs. The HRM should also focus on training a good cross-cultural mix of candidates that can mobilize diverse workforces in a multitude of settings.

Another way that HRM can enhance a firm's reputation is by focusing on identifying the mechanisms needed to coordinate relationships and abilities among subsidiaries. For example, if HRM can provide clear and open communication channels and media within the corporate network, its employees will feel more comfortable interacting with one another whether within the global firm's headquarters or from abroad.

In effect, a large part of the success of HRM political influence relies on its ability to maintain a good flow of communication between the members within the global organization. By keeping these channels open, global managers will be better able to exchange and grow from each other's experiences and to discuss the companies' emerging issues. Corporate communication programs are also crucial in training junior international managers, introducing them to the networks and cultural norms of the company, and establishing the importance for emerging leaders to translate their knowledge and expertise through the global network.

The mechanisms that could improve the amount of control and coordination HRM has in a global company include global teams, task forces and oversight committees that would act as flexible monitors of authority and competition for corporate global initiative, as well as devices that enable collaboration and integration amongst employees.

In addition to these methods, the HRM can further benefit global organizations with the cooperation of global team leaders- especially if they help to assist other employees by sharing their own strategies and the logic they themselves use in operations and planning. The HRM can facilitate this kind of cooperation by developing global leadership programs that can aid managers in coordinating tasks for their teams. Another way that global team leaders can encourage integration and collaboration is to delegate roles to locals working at regional levels rather than only to expatriates; in this way, increasing the levels of trust and cultural diversity in the global firm as well as the perception of fairness and help the reputation of the organization.

The authors believe that in addition to accepting the need for a new model of HRM in global firms, future research is needed in order to further investigate how HRM political influence can affect a company's global leadership in a cross cultural context. By focusing on more research regarding a new model of HRM political strategies, new methods of more efficient decision-making, better organization of people across borders, and greater communication amongst diverse employees can be attained.