



Naked truth about HR revealed

PART TWO

Recipe for failure. *Dr M Amr Sadik*

One day in December 2009 I was having a dinner with a friend of mine and enjoying delicious Syrian cuisine when he suddenly he looked at me and asked, "What is Human Resources?"

I was astonished, at this unexpected question from a management consultant, educated in USA with an engineering background and serious experience.

"Why are you asking?" I said. "Haven't you figured it out after all these years?"

Surprisingly – and depressingly – he said, "Recently I interviewed ten candidates for an HR Manager position and asked them the same question. Regrettably all of them responded

with one standard unique answer: "Policies and Procedures, Job Descriptions and all that other trivial stuff."

I said, "HR is a combination of philosophy and science. It is the A.R.T. of Attracting, Retaining and Terminating people at the end of their services. One of the critical goals in HRM is to strike the right balance between the needs of employees and limitations set by the company."

Many HR practitioners still don't get it and continue thinking inside the box, and we keep asking them why they don't do things differently. As a consequence, not infrequently, they become a victim of their own way of thinking and actions. Those can be called the "Yes, Sir" people. In

addition, some practitioners are not up to their assigned tasks and never will be, because of lack of knowledge, skill or simple desire. As Anthony Robbins said, "If you do what you've always done, you'll get what you've always gotten". So why do HR practitioners complain when budgets are cut or their plans are not approved or are even eliminated?

It is important to note – and we would venture to say often ... an HR manager's poor performance can be blamed largely on top management.

In the 90s I was sitting with Dr Awad El-Hadad, former GM of Arab Management Association in Egypt, discussing some activities for an HR committee. Dr Awad was very keen to elevate the role of HR in the Egyptian organisations, and had seen the pain of the practitioners during the monthly meetings. Digging into the matter, we agreed to conduct a series of meetings with Managing Directors, CEOs and other top executives in major corporations in Egypt to address the

"Right alongside the CFO." Jack Welch's words of wisdom about HR's role in the organisation

issues, understand their perspectives and embrace a new way of thinking and approaches for HR. Unfortunately, efforts were in vain, Human capital seems to not be the most important asset for some organisations.

On the flip side, I have observed that all the client organisations that I worked with, as an employee or consultant, have had autocratic and close-minded CEOs who still viewed HR as a "task master", "cost cutter" or "police force" - the one to deliver the bad news. Even when HR practitioners try to innovate, they are not allowed to do so.

But the issue is not only in the hands of HR. Do the big bosses know what HR is all about? Do they know what it entails to have an HR function in their organisation? Do they know who should head their HR function? We need answers to these questions before we blame HR. ■

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