Glossary

Ambiguity A lack of clarity or meaning in something: the difficulty in seeing and understanding, for example, the relationship between HR activities and individual/ organizational outcomes.

Appraisal The examination and assessment of a person's behaviour in relation to their performance over a period of time. It involves making judgements and based on these making decisions about future changes in behaviour with the objective of improving performance. It can involve the rating of a person's performance by a superior (in a managerial sense) with the rating being linked to subsequent decisions about rewards, development, or corrective action.

Assessment The tools and techniques used by an organization to identify and measure, either qualitatively or quantitatively, the skills, knowledge, and potential of applicants.

Benefit Normally contractually agreed non-pay additions to the wage or salary, provided by an employer as part of the overall employment package.

Bonus An additional, but variable, payment associated with individual, group, or organizational performance.

Career planning The activities and policies that link a person's current and future capabilities to development decisions, future job opportunities, and promotion.

Career and succession management Formal and informal processes that ensure talented people are developed and available to fill strategically important roles.

Coaching A process in which a 'coach' supports an individual to develop his/her skills through a series of structured conversations by exploring the nature of challenges faced at work and helping the individual to identify the best approaches to those challenges to achieve the desired outcomes.

Collective agreement A written statement defining the arrangements agreed between a union and employer. Such agreements are only legally enforceable if this is expressly stated or if the collective agreement is referred to in individual written terms and conditions of employment.

Collective bargaining The process of negotiation between trade union representatives and employers, or employer representatives, to establish by agreement the terms and conditions of employment of a group of employees.

Competence The combination of skills, knowledge, and experience that results in a person's ability to carry out specific tasks and procedures to a required standard. A specific competency can also be understood as an underlying characteristic of a person (i.e. a trait, belief, ability, or attitude, that distinguishes one person from another and explains differences in job performance).

Contribution Something wider than performance: relates to what a person does 'beyond contract' that is of value to the organization.

Culture The shared beliefs, values, and understandings that define and distinguish one group from another. It is what Hofstede and Hofstede call 'the collective programming of the mind'.

Culture shock The psychological and emotional reaction associated with exposure to different cultural environments.

Development Changes in a person and in what they can do. It reflects the belief that all people have the potential to be more and do more, and that this potential needs to be developed as well as utilized. People can develop to a limited degree through training, but development implies the employment of a much wider range of learning experiences and methods, such as coaching and mentoring, not all of which are necessarily connected to the working environment.

Dialectic The tension that arises as a result of conflicting ideas, interacting forces, or competing interests. The term can also be used to explain the process of reconciling opposing or differing opinions and interests by means of argument and discussion. It is assumed that the constant need for adaptation and change can result in differences and conflict over different stakeholder interests and in the legitimacy of managerial decision-making rights.

Differentiation The practice of distinguishing people based on their innate and acquired talents and developing different and focused HR policies and practices that reflect the special value these people represent to the organization.

Discipline The formal measures taken, sanctions applied, and outcomes achieved by management in response to perceived acts of misconduct.

Employee engagement A workplace approach resulting in the psychological and social conditions that encourage all members of an organization to give their best each day, become committed to their organization's goals and values, and motivated to contribute to organizational success.

Ethical dilemmas These represent situations where ethical choices have to be made and where different criteria or standards come into consideration.

Ethics The branch of philosophy that deals with morality: what is good and bad, right and wrong. Ethics is about the choice and application of values and standards to establish the social acceptability of behaviour and action.

Evidence-based management This is about translating principles based on best evidence into organizational practices. By focusing on issues about which there is a clear evidential base the assumption is that the practice of managing will improve and lead to better outcomes.

Expatriate worker An employee deployed overseas, usually sourced from his/her country of origin.

Expectation The behavioural impact of different 'reward experiences' and on whether the amount or form of any given reward creates a positive or negative response. The more people expect, whether this is considered reasonable or not, is not the point; what is, is that expectations, if not met, will result in disappointment and behaviours that reflect this emotional state.

External recruitment The process of identifying and attracting potential employees to an organization to fill current or future vacancies.

Fairness An inherently subjective term that describes behaviour or outcomes in terms of criteria, standards, and expectations.

Global organization An organization that employs a workforce in different countries throughout the world, with a view to maximizing performance by sourcing or providing goods and/or services in a globally based market, and in which decisions are driven by markets rather than by geography.

Grievance The formalization of a claim that someone, either a co-worker or management, has acted wrongly towards another, and, as a consequence, inflicted physical or psychological harm on that person. This may involve an act, or acts, of misconduct.

Hiring or employing The overall process of taking on new staff from outside the organization.

Horizontal integration Relates to the link between different HR activities and practices, and emphasizes the importance of looking at what HR does holistically, rather than as separate and disconnected elements. The concept also expresses the need for consistency in the sense that the way in which the activities are carried out reflects understood and agreed strategic objectives. For example, adopting an individualist, rather than a collectivist, approach to the management of people implies the use of individual reward and development practices if consistency in practice is to be achieved.

Human capital metrics *see* Workforce analytics

Human resource development Used by many writers, but fewer practitioners, in preference to the term 'training'. Its relationship to training is similar to that between HRM and personnel management, in that it represents a more holistic and strategic approach to learning than does training.

Human resource function A term that can be used in a specific sense to mean the HR department, but in its wider sense it relates to all activities and responsibilities connected to managing people, which includes the role played by organizational leaders, line, and departmental managers.

Human resource management (HRM) A late twentieth-century approach to the management of employees, which sees people as a key organizational resource that needs to be developed and utilized to support the organization's operational and strategic objectives.

Human resources (HR) An alternative to 'people'; also the term used by organizations to describe the specialized department that deals with the administration and management of employees.

Incentive The prospect or promise of a reward that is conditional upon an agreed performance outcome being achieved.

Internal recruitment The process of identifying current employees who may be suitable for newly created vacancies or for replacing staff who leave.

Leadership The act of leading: an organizational position/role that confers power and authority on individuals and confers upon them specific responsibilities and requirements.

Learning A fundamental and natural human process involving growth and change. Learning is about behavioural modification. It is inferred from differences in what we know, believe, and can do. Learning is the way in which we can improve and be different from that which we were.

Managerial prerogative 'Prerogative' means the right to make decisions and to establish rules that are essential in allowing the production system to operate efficiently and effectively, and, historically, managers have tended to guard their prerogative and have tried to prevent trade unions from eroding it.

Mediation An alternative form of dispute resolution. A voluntary process where an independent facilitator assists two or more parties to explore options for resolving a dispute, disagreement, or problem situation by attempting to reach a mutually acceptable agreement.

Mental models Images, representations, or schemes of how we perceive and understand the world around us. Like all models, mental models are abstractions of reality. The models we use represent simplifications of the 'real' world and therefore can never represent all that exists in that world we are trying to understand. No matter how well constructed, all models are imperfect in some context or time.

Mentoring The development of a relationship between a more senior person in an organization and more junior person, often as part of a development programme, involving the experienced person using his/her greater knowledge and expertise to accelerate the junior colleague's development.

Metrics What and how something is measured. HR metrics focus on key aspects of the labour force, its behaviours, costs, and contributions. The use of measures is increasingly associated with important features of the HR function, as part of the process of evaluating its efficiency and effectiveness.

Misconduct Behaviour that transgresses contractual arrangements, work rules, established norms of performance, or other standards that can be seen as reasonable and necessary for the effective employment and management of people at work; behaviour that is deemed to be unacceptable by reference to formally established norms.

Motivation A force that exists within people that initiates and directs behaviour. In this sense, it can also be seen as a force that drives behaviour in certain directions rather than others. The force and direction are linked to goals that people are assumed to desire and outcomes that they would prefer to avoid.

Multinational companies (MNCs) Companies that have a national base, but which operate and trade in multiple countries.

National culture A complex system of norms, social values, behaviours, expectations, and legal frameworks that gives an identity to a particular country.

Negotiation Technically, negotiating is the process through which agreement is reached; where differences between two parties are resolved as a result of mutual compromise.

Negotiation of order Has its origins in the writings of sociologists such as Gouldner, Park, and Strauss who saw society and institutions as made up of different interest groups that needed to be constantly working to create order and flexibility, a process that involves a succession of conflicts, assimilations, and accommodations. Social order achieved through shared agreements and understanding is not fixed or binding for all time and must be reconstituted continually, or worked out. The theory highlights emergence, change, and temporality, the embedded and contextual nature of order, and the omnipresence of specific power relations. Rewards of different kinds represent an important means of influencing the way order is continually being renegotiated and agreed.

Organizational blockages Practices, behaviours, or structural/cultural characteristics that inhibit, punish, or prevent people from being productive.

Organizational citizenship Behaviour that extends beyond that which is necessary to carry out job duties and responsibility to the required standard. It is behaviour that represents a person's voluntary commitment to an organization or company that is not part of his/her contractual tasks.

Organizational memory The accumulated body of data, information, and knowledge created in the course of an organization's existence (also known as institutional/corporate memory).

Paradox A concept that describes a situation which contains conflicting and possibly contradictory ideas, behaviours, and/or elements.

Pay Regular and contractually agreed monetary rewards, usually linked to position or job and paid as a wage/salary.

Performance The relationship between a person's capabilities and what the person actually achieves, usually related to a person's job.

Performance appraisal A process for reviewing the past performance of an employee, and agreeing future objectives and development activities.

Performance management The set of practices through which work is defined and reviewed, capabilities are developed, and rewards are distributed.

Personnel management The name given to the specialized management function that developed after the Second World War which assumed responsibility for the employment, payment, and training of employees.

Philosophy An enduring framework of beliefs, values, and ways of doing things that can exist at the individual and organizational levels. A shared philosophy is a powerful way of creating a common purpose and set of expectations as to how people behave.

Planning A set of techniques, an approach, and a mindset, all of which relate to achieving specified objectives. It should be understood as a process, rather than a time-constrained event.

Positivism The term used to describe an approach to the study of society, or phenomena that relies specifically on scientific evidence, such as experiments and statistics, and the discovery of facts, to reveal the 'true' nature of how society operates or the phenomenon being studied.

Potential What people are capable of doing. Potential implies that what people are capable of doing is not being utilized, but could develop as a result of learning and experience.

Presenteeism The problem of workers being present on the job but, because of illness or other medical conditions, not fully functioning.

Productivity An economic concept that relates to and measures input–output relationships.

Psychological contract The obligations that an employer and an employee perceive to exist between them as part of the employment relationship, and which comprises mutual expectations and promises.

Reciprocity A response to a positive action with another positive action. People who are treated well by their manager or the organization may well reciprocate with higher levels of loyalty and commitment and deliver higher levels of discretionary effort. It tends to be generated when that which is done to someone and valued is unexpected and discretionary—and is probably symbolic rather than material in form.

Reification The process of giving things that are inanimate (e.g. social constructs) human characteristics such that they become an independent, living entity. For example, when we talk about organizations as having objectives, of thinking, of having a conscience we reify them. The same thing happens to HRM/HR—it is almost always, but wrongly, represented as having an independent existence, because we often have to simplify complex phenomena.

Rewards Can be both material and symbolic in form; both are outcomes of the employment and psychological contracts.

Selection The process, culminating in the decision to fill a vacancy from internal or external applicants, used by the organization to choose the most suitable candidate from a pool of applicants.

Settlement agreement A legally binding agreement signed by both parties which formally brings to an end the contract of employment on specific terms that must be agreed by both parties. It is recognized by statute and is the only way you can validly waive your employment law rights.

Social capital Relates to the value of personal networks, relationships, and cooperative behaviour between people.

Social constructionism A theory of knowledge that examines the development of jointly constructed understandings of the world, based on experience, that form the basis for shared assumptions about what is real in the world.

Stagnation The detrimental effect on creativity, change, and originality that is associated with relying largely or entirely on the existing workforce to fill job vacancies. The lack of 'new blood' from outside, which can bring new ideas, challenge, and vitality into an organization, can contribute to the long-term decline of an organization that is too inward-looking in its search for new talent.

Strategic A particular mindset and approach defined by a more integrated and holistic view of the world of business and management.

Strategic advantage Actions that follow on from specific strategies which make the organization better and different from its competitors or those against which it is benchmarked.

Strategy A coherent way of doing things that is intended to produce required outcomes and results.

Survival curve Measures the number of new recruits (normally those who start together or over a short period) who are still there after, say, twelve months. The survival rate can be calculated by dividing the number who started with those left at monthly intervals.

Tacit knowledge Relates to knowledge of things gained from various sources and internalized by an individual, through the process of 'doing' and practice. Represents for many people the achievement of the final stage—unconscious competence, where tasks are carried out based on experience and learning from past successes and failures without the person being aware of the link between knowledge, know-how, and action.

Talent Used generically, this describes people's knowledge, skills, and capabilities and means the same as human capital. Also used to describe special, higher, and scarce skills/capabilities. Talent is what people have and what they can do.

Talent management Formal attempts aimed at identifying, developing, and using people who have been designated as talented.

Trade union An organization that is independent of an employer and funded by member contributions, the function of which is to represent worker interests in relations between workers and employers.

Training Planned, structured, and often formalized learning experiences that seek to develop specific skills and knowledge needed for effective job performance. Historically, employees have learned many of the competencies they need to perform effectively by being trained.

Trust A characteristic of a relationship between two people or between people and an organization. It involves having faith, confidence, and belief in another.

Unintended consequences Outcomes that are not foreseen or intended by a purposeful action (also called unanticipated/unforeseen consequences). They can be positive but are more often negative.

Vertical integration Relates to the link between policies and practices associated with the management of people, and the wider business objectives. Vertical integration can be based on the cascading down of corporate priorities and objectives, which then inform HR policies, practices, etc. Alternatively, it can be based on representatives of HR informing senior management of the current and future state of human resource capacity and capabilities, which helps to ensure that corporate strategy is grounded in a realistic understanding of what is available to deliver the strategy.

Whistle-blower A person who exposes information or activity relative to an organization that is deemed illegal, unethical, or not correct.

Whole-time equivalents (WTEs) A quantitative measurement of the number of staff available to or in the establishment that allows for staff on different employment contracts to be reflected in the 'head count'.

Workforce analytics A more quantitative approach to workforce planning, relying on data analysis to identify longer-term trends to diagnose future problems/issues.

Workforce planning (WP) Originally known as 'manpower planning' and previously described as 'human resource planning', this is concerned with planning and controlling the quantity and quality of labour available to an organization.