HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT PLANS

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Summary

This chapter outlines the essential elements of planning for Human Resource Development as well as the benefits of planning for global and sustainable development. The most important aspect of planning is what we learn as we plan and what we learn as we implement our plan so we will optimize the quality of the outcomes

we desire to achieve. The chapter highlights the importance of planning as a critical function for the health and survival of individuals, groups, organizations and societies. At its core planning contains the essence of what it means to be a global citizen. When we plan we focus on enlightened self-interest and on our interdependence; we create, we love, we hate, we learn, we confront risk, we deal with ambiguity and complexity, we survive, we reflect and express our freedom, we renew our direction and purpose, we expand our capacity, we charge the grandeur of our achievements.

The chapter explains how learning from planning is critical to business success. It outlines planning strategies for HRD and action plans as well as telling how to achieve fluency in implementing 'work plans'. The chapter discusses a number of essential elements of planning as a science such as its structure, its systematic approach, its analytical base, its creative focus, its inquiry perspective and its participatory dimension. In particular Sofo stresses the learning-cycle characteristics of four planning loops.

1. Introduction

Planning has not always been an important area written about in management books. Human Resource Development (HRD) plans are action steps or strategies oriented towards the future. Such plans indicate how resources will be allocated and which activities will be funded, encouraged and implemented so those people development goals will be achieved.

Leonard Nadler from George Washington University is regarded the father of Human Resource Development. He is the first to write about this field and encourage a systematic approach to learning within organizations. In the first edition of his 1970 book, *Developing Human Resources*, Nadler explains that the function of HRD is to ensure an organization develops a learning culture and a learning strategy to achieve its mission and goals. In essence this is still accepted today.

Nadler tells the story about a man who took his son into a field and showed him how to put his hand in a bag of seed and scatter it. The man then handed his son the bag and watched him scatter more seed. The father was displeased with the result and so showed his son again by explaining how much seed to take from the bag, how to hold it in his hand and the motion he must reproduce to ensure a proper scattering. The father supervised his son until he was happy that he was scattering the seed to a minimum required standard. The organization in this story was the family. The family's goals included survival. Among the family's strategies to achieve this goal was farming. The father had to pass the skill down to his son on how to sow seed. This passing down of skill is called training and development. How did the father plan to develop his son's ability to be able to perform to a necessary standard to contribute to achieving the family's goals? He may have thought that when his son was of a certain age and displayed potential he would take him into the field and teach him what to do. Planning to train and develop his son may have been a fairly simple process.

Since then family businesses have become large corporations. Technology has taken over the job of hand sowing of seed and life has become much more complex. Planning in organizations for developing human resources is not a simple step of taking a person

into a field and demonstrating a skill. Many managers, who run their own business, however may still do this. Their planning needs are apparently no more than what was the farmer's planning needs in Nadler's story. Planning may be simply a thought you get in the morning or the day before to show a person how to do something.

Human Resource Development is a new field that only began emerging as a discipline about thirty years ago. Today in many large organizations we have HRD managers that are managers who manage the learning of employees within organizations. We even have a fast growing global focus on developing businesses to becoming learning establishments.

The imperative to plan for all this learning is pressing. The vision, mission and goals of the leadership influence HRD plans. HRD plans include the design and construction of developmentally oriented activities essential to assisting people to achieve the goals of the organization. In business, the richest source of these developmental activities is the work itself. Working is learning. Therefore, planning strategies for HRD will be the same planning strategies for the duties, tasks and roles of workers. Planning strategies to assist people to do their job better will have the best chance of improving their capability, their potential, their influence and their wealth.

2. Planning is an imperative

Planning is a critical function for every individual, group and business. In many respects we cannot plan. It's obvious to say this but all humans have the capacity to think. We cannot help thinking. When we think we plan, we scheme; we wonder what we will do today and tomorrow and how we will go about doing it. Many of us keep diaries that organize the activities that will help us to achieve the plans we have in our minds.

Planning is important to people's health. Planning for individuals and groups consists of the information and the procedures we have thought about to get us where we want to be at some time in the future. We plan to survive so we have to work out how we will do it. We may even plan how we want to get rich. I think therefore I plan!

The fact that we have a goal in mind implies that we will try to achieve it in some way. We will behave in a manner that is purposeful and intentional. Planning means creating possibilities, evaluating alternatives, choosing one or keeping an open mind on the possibilities until the very last moment of having to do something.

For many people planning may be a routine and habitual activity with little awareness that planning is actually occurring. However, the mark of the professional is that there is a deep sense of awareness about planning and that it requires considerable skill and imagination.

Planning is a creative act. Planning is everything but plans themselves may be useless without follow-through. Planning creates confidence in the midst of uncertainty. Even if the plan is not used, the process of planning can create new insights, new relationships among staff, deeper awareness, solutions and a reaffirmation in democratic processes. Put simply, planning is creating a sequence of steps to guide us towards where we want to go.

3. Planning as learning is the key skill for business success

The world is in the midst of significant change. There are continual and notable moves to make individuals responsible for change. Outsourcing many government and private sector services means there is an increasing reliance on individuals to work alone, in partnerships and in virtual teams using telephone, computer and video technology. Individuals work from various offices within organizations and at home. Less and less there is a permanent desk; the mobile telephone and lap top computer is the worker's office. Individuals are increasingly being expected to seek out projects and plan their lives and learning around discrete projects. Bosses increasingly expect their staff to sign individual work contracts. The Australian government has followed an international trend and put in place new workplace relation laws that encourage employers to establish work conditions at the individual level.

Some people are goal-oriented, some are activity-oriented and some are learning-oriented. Whatever our orientation in life we all tend to focus on purpose. A focus on purpose is the hallmark of planning! In other words, we plan our activities to deal with real life problems. We do the things we need to because we are life-centered, task-centered and problem-centered in the way we work. Sometimes we do things for their own sake, because we enjoy those things.

Most adults undertake at least one or two major learning efforts every year. Allen Tough points out that some adults undertake a many as 15 or 20 learning projects annually, which represents up to 700 hours of work out of a total of 2080 annual hours of work in a 40 hours week. The learners themselves plan about 70% of all these learning projects. Adults live, work and learn around projects they set by themselves and for themselves. When adults undertake their own learning projects they go through three broad planning phases. Tough (1979) identified three planning phases that include twenty-six possible steps learners might take in planning to meet their own needs.

Phase 1: Goal setting

Setting an action goal includes assessing your own interests, seeking information on various opportunities, choosing the most appropriate knowledge and skill to hone, establishing a desired level or quantity to achieve and estimating the cost and benefits.

Phase 2: Choosing a planner

The planning process involves choosing a planner that may be yourself or another person such as a consultant, mentor or teacher. It may be a group of people such as a club or a resource such as a book or the Internet. The two critical success factors to choosing a planner are to work with the planner collaboratively rather than independently and to work with him/her proactively rather than reactively.

Phase 3: Implementing the plan

Implementation of the plan involves the learner/employee engaging in the plan identified in Phase 2. The three critical factors in Phase 3 are the variety and richness of

the resources selected and used their availability and the learner's skill in utilizing them fully.

If there is so much planning by adults initiated by themselves outside of the employment sphere, it would be reasonable to conclude that organizations that encourage their staff to use their planning skills for themselves and for the organization will have harnessed a valuable resource and vital skill. Shoshana Zuboff in her classic book, *In the Age of the Smart Machine* claims that the new form of work *is* learning. To work is to be learning. We cannot learn.

There is a growing importance on the role individuals will take in business. There are changing perspectives for individuals and for organizations. Rather than a growing focus on job descriptions and titles the shift is towards using skills portfolios and roles. Rather than maintaining a focus on complete ownership by managers the shift is towards partnerships, joint ventures and collaboration. Rather than a focus on defined career paths the shift is towards new and multiple ways to develop and change. Another shift is towards greater openness about company information and, paradoxically, increased focus on confidentiality, ethics and commercial-in-confidence principles. Given the Internet and freedom of information, secrecy will be difficult to maintain. There is a growing importance on producing more regular statements of accountabilities tied to smaller chunks of work. Individuals and organizations are increasingly required to produce plans, projections of outcomes and to measure themselves periodically against those plans.

The 360-degree feedback system is taking increased prominence in working life. This means that everyone is telling each other their reactions to their performance. In the old days only the bosses told their staff. These days it all comes back on the boss as well. This is what 360 degrees means that information comes full circle back to inform everyone about performance.

Individuals are expected to manage their own career continuously which in addition to being measured by promotions and moving upwards will be evaluated on a project by project basis and the size of contracts won.

A new strategy has been identified called self-directed learning. The technology developed for this strategy involves using learning contracts that are signed and binding. Here workers align their needs with business goals and strategies. The planning process is dominant and requires a keen focus in order to maximize useful outcomes.

Self-directed learning is a sophisticated form of management that relies heavily on planning. The essential component is the ability to take responsibility by planning the outcomes you want to achieve and then checking the expectations against the results after a specified period.

Two other key issues here include having an orientation towards planning and a readiness for planning. Planning works well when it is part of the repertoire of working and when people are feeling a need for it because there is some sense of urgency, because they find themselves in a mess or because they have a problem they wish to solve. The sense of urgency can be self-imposed or it can come from the Organization

or other environmental influences. When these two aspects of planning are missing it is very likely that the *glacial pace* by which individuals and organizations make decisions will paralyze them.

4. Two planning strategies for HRD

Both strategies, 'strategic planning' and 'scenario planning' are effective when they incorporate the development needs of people. Planning using these strategies is the transmission system that ensures HRD assists the organization to achieve its goals.

4.1 Strategic planning

Eight steps to strategic planning include:

1. Decision to plan (planning to plan)
2. Performance and gap analysis
3. Mandates and values scan
4. External environments scan
5. Internal environment scenarios
6. Scenario modeling
7. Formulating action plans and contingencies
8. Implementation

Authors like Bryson have developed much technology for conducting strategic planning. Generally most approaches address three important questions.

1. *What are we achieving now? (Steps 1 & 2 above)*
2. *Where do we want to go? (Steps 3, 4, & 5 above)*
3. *What is the best way to get there? (Steps 6, 7 & 8 above)*

Strategic planning involves envisioning the future and deciding how that vision will be achieved. It is a systematic attempt to appraise the performance of the business, to quantify its achievements, to define its long-term goals, to develop strategies to achieve its new outcomes and to allocate resources to execute those strategies effectively and efficiently. Each step although discrete should be revisited in subsequent steps. The planning process is not linear but iterative.

It is a myth to believe that planning occurs before the action. Ideally, planning and action should be a dialectical process. Those responsible for facilitating the planning process should ensure that it is an integrated, inclusive experience incorporating HRD.

4.1.1 What are we achieving now?

Steps 1 & 2 include clarifying expectations of the planning process. There is a meta-planning process that is important. All staff in an organization and all members of a community need to be educated in what it means to plan, what roles and responsibilities people will adopt, what capabilities they will need for genuine participation and what they will learn and contribute in the process. Managers cannot assume that staff is fluent in critical contribution or in planning process skills.

Senior managers can inspire their staff when they jointly reconstruct their need for renewal and formulate their vision. This commitment to review, renewal and revival is important to success. Establishing an empowered planning team will enable the commitment to be sustained. The planning team's first task might be a performance and gap analysis that involves determining what the business is currently achieving compared to what it should be achieving. The role of HRD in planning and researching will assist in searching out information relevant to current performance.

Managers inspire staff when they create a place for learning to ensure that staff will have the capability to meet the challenges in beginning the planning process. In addition this will help avoid the adverse effects and cynicism that result from not empowering working teams. There are critical success factors to effective teamwork which management has to encourage. The planning team's first task might be to address the key question: what should we be achieving that we are not achieving today?

4.1.2 Where do we want to go? (Steps 3, 4, & 5)

The question of where the organization wants to go is addressed by attending to steps 3, 4 and 5. Mandates and values scan involves in the first instant clarifying what the organization *must* achieve, that is, what are the mandates in terms of its legal and contractual obligations. The justification for the existence of the organization is encapsulated in its mandates plus its values and mission. The planning team needs to revisit the reasons for existence of the organization. Then this is re-constructed across the entire organization. Clarity of shared vision achieves strengthening the commitment of staff. Everyone's sense of purpose is renewed and reinvigorated. Energy is replenished and focused anew.

External environment scanning involves benchmarking, updating on the new opportunities and threats that are coming from the environment. Information needs to be collected from the global environment, from industry and from all sources of possible competition and cooperation. Many issues need to be considered such as demographics, information and communication technology, economic and political developments and possible direction.

Internal environment scenarios include revisiting the enterprise's:

- strategy (its goals and methods for achieving them);
- structure (its task groupings and the way people are positioned and expected to relate to each other);
- systems (its information, communication and decision-making procedures and processes).

Dimensions of this information that the enterprise should be monitoring regularly also need to be benchmarked and reconsidered. Deciding how the information continues to be collected, analyzed, interpreted and stored regularly is an important aspect of environmental scanning. The persistent danger exists that the dominant mindsets of the organization will continue to be given legitimacy at the expense of new ways of thinking. Management responsibility includes the act of expecting new ideas. To be champions and change agents, management must encourage difference. This means that

management will expect people to create and adapt the organization and not vice-versa. The new perspective puts trust and power in people.

An enlightened management will have shed some assumptions about their ownership and their power. Management who truly wants to continually improve their organization will make explicit to their staff the assumptions that they reject and why they have rejected them. Here are some commonly held assumptions that stifle planning processes.

1. There is one best way to manage.
2. Management including the board of directors knows best how to manage.
3. If you send managers off to executive seminars they will learn new skills and behaviors for managing better.
4. Managers are always searching for new ideas to apply to their organization to make it better.
5. Managers who put new structures and strategies in place can expect that their people will automatically adopt their new systems.
6. Employees do not want any involvement in planning and managing.
7. Planning is a waste of time (all levels).

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