



# IS HR FOR EMPLOYEES OR MANAGEMENT?

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There has been an argument on where HR managers stand; whether for employees or against employees. It is clear that if HR is for employees, they may be against management and vice versa. This question is quite very illogical and should not be entertained in the emerging world. There are rapid changes in roles and functions of the HR manager. It is not ethical and professional for HR Managers to be partisan or one-sided in conducts, activities or decision. HR is not a task, it is a profession with dignity and honour; and this must be upheld to ensure that we remain relevant in our business space. There has been calling for HR Managers to be Business Partners; and the question is partner to who? Business owners only or employees alike?

## Why must HR be on the side of Management?

Management in this context implies the business owners and key stakeholders like top-line executives. These are the decision makers. These are set of people that can decide what happens to employees. However, we have peculiar cases of "one-man business" in this clime. Let's focus on the subject.

HR must be on the side of management to ADVISE on employee matters. It takes depth of analytical mind to advise appropriately. Most business owners don't get the right advice from the HR Managers. There are advice that must be given on legal matters, technical issues, strategic matters and several other issues. The ability to offer the best of advice determines the extent of relevance to the management. On this note, the decision must be such that will protect the interest of the company and also safeguard the value propositions of the employees. The ethics of our profession requires that management must rely on our advice to take good decisions. This is one of the foundational reasons for "HR Analytics" that is fast gaining popularity. HR Manager who cannot give good advice is lesser in value than presumed. Advice must be proactive and result-oriented.

The management needs HR managers to MANAGE CRISIS. This is shocking right! But, that is the real test of resilience. There are rising engagements between HR Managers and various Trade Unions. Some of these cases result into terrible crisis; hence the HRM is relied upon to manage the situation. There are other cases of inter-departmental crisis, grievances, sexual harassment, diversity problems,

ethnicity and performance management. All components that have the potential to brew crisis must be identified by HRM and proactively managed. The best way to manage crisis is to prevent the crisis. As a Business Partner, HRM must be able to manage crisis.

Management relies on HRM to a large extent to PLAN ITS BUSINESS (either for short or long-term). Unfortunately, some HRM are not properly equipped to deliver on this. The role goes beyond manpower planning. Product planning, business expansion, corporate transformation, reformation and strategic alliance with other entities require deep participation of the HRM, not just as an adviser, but also a planning specialist. Planning requires more careful in-depth thought on decisions to be taken; and the implementation thereof.

HRM is saddled with the responsibility of ensuring that management GETS FEEDBACK FOR IMPROVEMENT. In many cases, management needs feedback from employees for improvement and the only gateway is HRM. This is vital where HRM earns the trust of the employees and management. If the management cannot trust the HRM, there will be no feedback and everyone will be in the dark.

HRM is highly responsible to the management in **COST MANAGEMENT**. This does not mean that HRM will be unreasonable with cost, but value-based spending on employee matters. Where employees' cost is very high, management will come to the table with HRM to carry-out steps to cut down and same time increase where necessary. The knowledge of finance and cost management should not be overlooked by HRM. It is pertinent to take some courses in cost management. This will guide better!

Finally, no business owner or management wants the business to collapse; hence HRM is highly required for **BUSINESS CONTINUITY**. The future of the organization is very important and HRM must see into that future. The future must be planned and it must be communicated to all employees. The HRM has the responsibility to make people believe in the future of the organization. In many cases, HRM does not realize this and the management does not feel comfortable with that.

Management sees HRM as custodian of policies and principles of the organization; hence some dimension of Internal control comes with the job. This appears unreal, but true. This is the reason the management expects HRM to apply policy at all times and also ensure that nobody goes against the rules. It is painful that same management may flout certain rules and want to escape the consequences.

### HRM on the side of Employee

It becomes a tough job for HRM if employees cannot see the HRM on their side as much as management want HRM on their side too. It is a world of double-edged sword which must be given total commitment. Employees want HRM to do "all" their biddings and even go extra mile, even if not possible.

Employees want HRM to **MAKE WORKPLACE BETTER AND ENJOYABLE FOR EVERYONE**; and they are absolutely right. In real sense, workplace will keep improving; hence needs of employees would always arise. The efforts put in organizational culture, business ethics and

professional interpersonal relationship by HRM will go a long way in creating a good workplace culture. It is the responsibility of HRM to build trust through proper management of employees' expectations. Employees' needs would change and HRM must manage all these.

Employees see HRM as taking instructions from management; hence they also want HRM to be **THEIR VOICE TO MANAGEMENT**. In that case, the HRM becomes the communication channel. Many employees want the HRM to take their resolution to management. As much as management gives directives, employees' perspectives should also be considered and the HRM must lead in communicating this to the management. Where employees

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cannot trust the HRM to do so, some ring-fencing may play-out and the HRM may be in the dark. This is where interpersonal relationships and communication skills come into play.

There is "human" side in the profession we confess to; that is the part employees want HRM to always display irrespective of the situation. We have seen cases where employees want HRM to bend rules and totally disregard principles just to demonstrate that they are humane. Employees want to extend their leave

days and expect HRM to look away; they want to have extra-income without extra work; they want better appraisal even when performance is low and also want free lunch. Employees **WANT HRM TO BE HUMANE**.

### Who should HRM be to both Management & Employee?

HRM is a **NEGOTIATOR**: this comes with understanding the needs of both parties and creating equi-balance. It is very unethical to be partisan in professional conduct. Taking either side negates the tenets of objectivity and independence. However, management does not want to understand this, because they believe that you must execute instructions, whether right or wrong. Remember that part of our oath in CIPM is to resign if situation will make a mess of the profession. You can lose a job; but, don't lose a profession.

HRM is **COMMUNICATOR**: He is to communicate between the management and the employees. Failure to do that may result in poor connection between the two components.

HRM is a **BUILDER**: There is always a tendency for relationship between management and employees to go sour. HRM is the builder of relationship in that instance. In some other context, HRM is expected to build trust between management and employees; to build values and culture. This is very important.

HRM is a **PLANNER**: As much as HRM plans with management it is also good to plan with employees. Planning here is not a plot. Plot may be adverse, but planning should be seen in positive note. HRM can plan product launch with employees and sell the idea to the management.

**Please, note that HRM is NOT A JUDGE, REFEREE, COUP PLOTTER, TALE-BEARER NOR A PERFECT PERSON.**

In all these, know when to act, how to act, where to act and on what to act! You cannot be everywhere and achieve every result.