

The Management of Human Resources Between Ethics and Practice

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ABSTRACT

In this paper, we propose an ethical compass to guide the work of HR management in particular tasks where the damage is done to another human being in order to achieve the greatest result.

This compass shows the need for organizations to develop responses that protect the well-being of the organization, the victims, and the managers in order to respond to the ethical questions that HRM raises.

Keywords : HRM, Ethics-Practice, Rules, Challenges.

Introduction

Ethical challenges influence the management of human resources. Every day, as part of communicating HR decisions, managers have the opportunity to change the shape and course of life of others. Managers make decisions that reward chosen candidates with salaries, benefits, knowledge and leave other remaining candidates deprived of these opportunities and benefits. Managers make promotional decisions that reward chosen employees with increased status and responsibility, leaving other employees thinking about their future in the company. HR managers make layoff decisions to improve business performance, while neglecting the added value that has been created by employees. Even when HR managers complete performance reviews, they can motivate one employee and destroy another.

Ultimately, for every HR management practice, there are winners and there are losers: those who get the job, a portfolio of benefits, and those who get nothing. So there is a reality within organizational life that managers want to engage in the acts of other people.

These tasks have important consequences for individuals, organizations and society. Although individuals might prefer or avoid performing them completely (Bazerman, Tenbrunsel, and Wade-Benzoni 1999; Folger and Skarlicki 1998; Tesser and Rosen 1975), failure to perform these tasks threatens the greater good for which they are destinies. Failure to perform them also threatens to harm the well-being and dignity of aggrieved parties (Bies, 2001; Molinsky and Margolis 2005), as well as the idea of HR professionals' morality and professional competence.

When the task is a fundamental part of the role or professional socialization, the failure to obtain these tasks has an even greater effect on the person who asked to perform them.

How will the Organizational Fellowship be a useful guide for HR professionals who are called upon to perform these ethically challenging tasks?

Conceptual frame :

A set of guidelines are provided by research on procedural justice, a term that refers to people's perception of the fairness of decision-making processes (Brockner 2002).

A central premise of procedural justice is that people should be treated consistently and fairly.

This way has been operationalized in at least three ways:

- giving a voice: giving those affected by a practice or an outcome the opportunity to offer inputs (Folger, 1977; Lind and Tyler 1988);
- provide meaningful explanations to those affected by a practice or outcome, as well as information about the decisions and actions that led to the practice or outcome that were fair and unbiased (Bies & Shapiro, 1988; Brockner, et al 1990.); and
- interpersonal treatment that is concerned with those affected by a practice (Frank, 2000), which is sometimes referred to as interactional justice (Bies and Moag 1986).

Research has shown that when procedural justice is granted, people are more willing to accept negative outcomes and less likely to respond destructively (eg, Greenberg 1990, 1993; Sheppard, Lewicki and Minton, 1992; Tyler 1999) .

Procedural justice appears to be an important ethical rule to guide the practice of ethically difficult tasks, such as negative feedback, and denial of bonuses. These tasks, in which the manager must cause pain or discomfort to another person under the pretext of general interest (Molinsky and Margolis 2005).

Managers face a crucial internal ethical challenge when called upon to cause harm to another human being.

- Did they recognize the compromise between one party and harm the defense of the interests of the other parties?
- Did they support this discomfort, this reluctance, about harming people, about distributing benefits to some and denying them to others, in the name of organizational goals or are they going to remove any questions for a rationalization of damages in a way that erases doubt?

An Ethical Compass builds on previous research on procedural justice, extending it to the full range of ethical challenges raised by these difficult tasks.

We will advance three ethical rules to guide HR practices. We then propose levers that can help managers to move towards the realization of these rules. We rely on two streams of research for the implementation of these three ethical rules, the challenges they pose, and the levers in order to equip managers to meet the challenges and live up to the ethical rules.

One stream of research focuses on tasks judged to be professionally ethically difficult as a necessary evil (Molinsky and Margolis 2005): tasks that involve causing harm to another human being in the name of a perception of the greater goal. These

tasks may cause psychological or physical harm to another human being in the service of achieving some beneficial outcome.

Necessary evils have far-reaching consequences for individuals, organizations, and society, but individuals often attempt to avoid performing them altogether (Bazerman, Tenbrunsel, and Wade-Benzoni 1999; Folger and Skarlicki 1998; Tesser and Rosen 1975). Research on how necessary evils are carried out according to ethical rules to guide managers to conduct good HRM and to realize these rules in practice.

The challenge lies in raising the level of human resources managers' awareness and the potential of their actions to have a positive effect on others. This is a daunting challenge, we suggest that HRM often leads to necessary evils that raise delicate questions about ethics.

1. The three ethical rules of HRM :

We propose three ethical rules to govern HR practices. Each of these rules embodies a fundamental principle and protects a leading constituency whose interests affect the work of HRM.

We will first specify the rules, then for each of them, we explain its function, the constituency whose interests it protects, and the problems, both practical and conceptual, in the face of the rule. We start simply by offering the three standards:

- First rule: Advance the objective of the organization: Execute the task in question, so that progress is made towards the objective.
- Second rule: Improve the dignity of those harmed by the action.

When the managers go to distribute the possibilities and the advantages, there are those who do not receive the possibilities and the advantages and those who receive less than the others. We must explain to staff that companies must go through cycles of destruction-restructuring.

- Third rule: Provide support to people with moral sensitivity who perform morally ambiguous tasks.

Someone has to provide you with the poor performance appraisal to announce the layoff. The ambivalence induced in the performance of these tasks reflects an underlying unease about the fair and equitable treatment of results, and managers must remain attentive to this unease.

1.1 First rule: Advance the purpose of the organization :

It seems self-evident that hiring and firing decisions, performance reviews, and even downsizing should serve a central organizational purpose. However, they tend to

be ignored, and even worse, in performing these tasks, the underlying purpose of the organization is often quite misplaced.

Making explicit the purpose of the organization, with the aim that this ethical rule can align specific HR practices towards a clear understanding of the purpose they are aiming for in advance.

This rule can perform two functions.

- First, it forces managers to identify the purpose their actions are intended to serve. It invites careful consideration of the purpose of these practices in order to serve, to engage in a thoughtful due diligence process to ensure that the end does not justify the practice.

The need to provide negative feedback does not arise from bad practice. It makes practice difficult, and it causes emotional and material harm to some people.

Clarity of goals can help managers assess the difficulties and damages, and it can prompt them to question whether the goal really requires practice and whether it is truly moving towards the goal.

Could there be other ways to advance the goal?

- Secondly, this deontological rule also allows a second function: it makes the underlying objective psychologically salient.

In general, good leadership tends to enhance motivation and performance in work tasks (Hackman, 2002; Locke and Latham 1990,2002).

Research on bad performances (Tesser, Rosen and Tesser 1971), indicates that people simply avoid delivering them because, perhaps, they anticipate that others will feel distressed (Folger and Skarlicki 2001) or try to respond with empathy to the experience of those who are aggrieved (Molinsky and Margolis 2005).

In general, it is reassuring to know that human beings cringe at the thought of hurting others, but there are purposes for which people will harm others, at least to some limited extent (Blass 1991; Milgram 1974).

Making clear goals allows people to make sense of the harm they do, to understand what they are doing on a level that accentuates the goal (Vallacher & Wegner, 1987). Some might fear that this amounts to rationalization. However, our goal is to reduce the likelihood of rationalization and increase the likelihood of thoughtful, considered judgment in HRM practices, so that even those that raise ethical questions have been checked against underlying goals. Advancing the purpose of the organization reflects the interests and needs of the three central constituencies.

It captures the concern of those who benefit from the continued and efficient operation of the organization, usually the owners, customers and employees.

Terminating a contract employee, refusing a promotion, or closing a plant should all be designed to ensure the efficient and diligent functioning of the organization. It can be assumed that the efficient functioning of the organization benefits those who continue to use its products and services, those who remain employed in the manufacture of these products and services, and those who benefit economically from the production of the company.

Furthermore, advancing the purpose of the organization also provides a degree of protection for harmed targets of HR practices. It also places limits on the harm that can be done, calling on managers to limit damage to further the goal.

1.2 Second rule: Enhance the dignity of those harmed by the action :

This second rule is different and significantly increases procedural justice which seeks to embody basic respect for human beings in dealing with people with the procedures that come. A premise of procedural justice is that people should be treated consistently and fairly.

Research has shown that when procedural justice is granted, people are more willing to accept negative outcomes and less likely to respond destructively (eg, Greenberg 1990,1993; Lind et al 2000; Sheppard, Lewicki and Minton, 1992; Tyler 1999).

Considering that procedural justice is above all a defensive rule, which aims to prevent the violation of rights and to promote the value of human beings, dignity. It is a positive standard, aimed at the proper functioning of human beings. Although dignity is often mentioned in discussions of procedural justice (Tyler and Lind 1992), here we use dignity to mean something distinct and specific. Dignity refers to the capacities of individuals to exercise those faculties that define a person as distinctive of man, the faculties that confer on each human being the capacity to develop and pursue ends (Margolis 2001). Dignity expands the goal of procedural justice. Procedural justice revolves around a concern for injured individuals and experiences of the wrongful act itself.

The second ethical rule that we propose revolves around the abilities of injured persons to function constructively after the harmful act. This second ethical rule has a different function from procedural justice. The procedural justice function can provide a sense of fairness and ensure acceptance of outcomes, which limits potential repercussions and negative emotions for victims and witnesses.

As suggested by studies indicating that procedural justice has a more significant effect on negative emotions than on positive emotions (Weiss, Suckow, and Cropanzano 1999), procedural justice prevents decline, conversely, it promotes dignity on the rise.

Dignity focuses on preserving and enhancing people's faculties and sense of identity needed to continue living. When practices lead to distributions, some lose their jobs, promotions, opportunities, rewards. Strengthening their dignity by empowering them with the ability to move forward and restoring their sense of self-efficacy (Bandura 1997), so they can deal with that hit, rebound, and move on the front. The challenges inherent in the first ethical rule are to make this second rule particularly important. In an imperfect world, managers don't have time to determine, perfectly, whether a practice is indeed justified, and even if it is justified, whether it advances the organization's purpose as intended.

Certainly, managers can take steps to ensure that a worthy goal is being advanced. Dignity introduces a commitment towards them, a responsibility to distribute between them the capacity to be agents of creation following the damage. It is a standard of compensation, ensuring that people harmed by HR practices can walk away with their human faculties intact.

1.3- Third rule: Provide support to people with moral sensitivity and who perform morally ambiguous tasks :

Like the other rules, before indicating, HR practices focus first and foremost on human beings. Human resources practices rarely take HRM practitioners into account. Although hiring, firing, promotion, evaluation and restructuring are actively carried out by people, those who perform these tasks have been largely neglected.

The negligence of HRM practitioners seems particularly problematic due to the promulgation of HRM. As we argued, in proposing the first ethical rule, often HR practices raise intractable ethical conflicts, and as we suggested in proposing the second rule, the effective execution of HRM can simultaneously result in a blow and restoring the person's humanity absorbs the blow.

Our third ethical rule brings into consideration the people who do HRM work. The function of this third rule is to define a criterion that takes into account the realistic psychological challenges faced by those who must implement HR practices.

We propose that HR practices should be designed to help those who perform them maintain their ability to ask moral questions and deliberate seriously, rather than arrive at rationalizations.

Wronged people can live with the noxious sense of dissonance, wondering, do the gains really justify the harm they have done? They will find it hard to live with the possibility that a bonus was given to the wrong person, that the layoff was not necessary to save the company, or that a negative review of an individual, even if she enhanced the performance of the team, could have harmed the individual too significantly.

Likewise, when it comes face-to-face with human beings who lose there. The crushing cocktail of an emotion felt by those who deny the possibility or impose the cost can lead the most conscientious HR practitioner either to dodge the task altogether or to do it in a way that reduces their own anxiety. (Molinsky and Margolis 2005). In these cases, the target's dignity does not register, even after the fact.

Our third ethical rule cannot allow managers to live with ambivalence and meet increased demands. It does, however, draw attention to the experience of managers. It creates an imperative for the design of HR practices so that they foster the capacity of HR practitioners. Specifically, this third agency ethical rule is for (a) the abilities of foster HR practitioners to maintain, rather than resolve, scruples and moral conflicts, and (b) provide means for HR practitioners to learn how to achieve multiple goals when performing acts that affect others.

Human resources practices are quite difficult to design, especially practices that conform to the rules of morality. The presentation of concern for the agent adopting these practices makes them more difficult to design.

Conceptually, it also raises the question of which party has priority: the organization, the target, or the practitioner?

Our goal in presenting this third rule is not just to complicate things. Rather, the capabilities of the person performing the HR practice must be considered if the HR practice is to be performed satisfactorily and ethically.

Simply letting the artist perform the image doesn't remove the problem, it dominates, and potentially exacerbates the problem. The practical challenge lies in equipping managers to perform unnatural acts. Human beings seek to evade or reduce harmful experiences, whether it be the dissonance of questionable practices or the anguish of witnessing the target's experience.

How managers can be equipped to live with negative emotions, with scruples, and with multiple demands to meet organizational needs and enhance the dignity of victims, while still being able to offer employment to a person and not others, providing a performance appraisal, and transferring jobs from one place to another?

We do not claim to have answers. These three ethical rules indicate the need for organizations to develop responses that protect the well-being of the organization, the victims, and the managers in order to respond to the ethical issues that HRM raises.

Conclusion :

The three ethical rules mentioned above present an attempt to shed light on possible actions that can guide the practice of HRM.

- ✓ Advance the objectives of the organization,
- ✓ improving the dignity of injured parties, and
- ✓ maintaining the moral sensitivity of those who perform the task, provide a small set of rules.

These underlying rules highlight the ethical challenges that arise in the performance of HRM work.

As important as procedural justice, good HRM becomes more powerful by standing alongside ethical rules that seek to give due consideration to organizational goals, active efforts to promote the dignity of aggrieved parties, and care and the development of people in high demand to perform human resource management tasks.

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