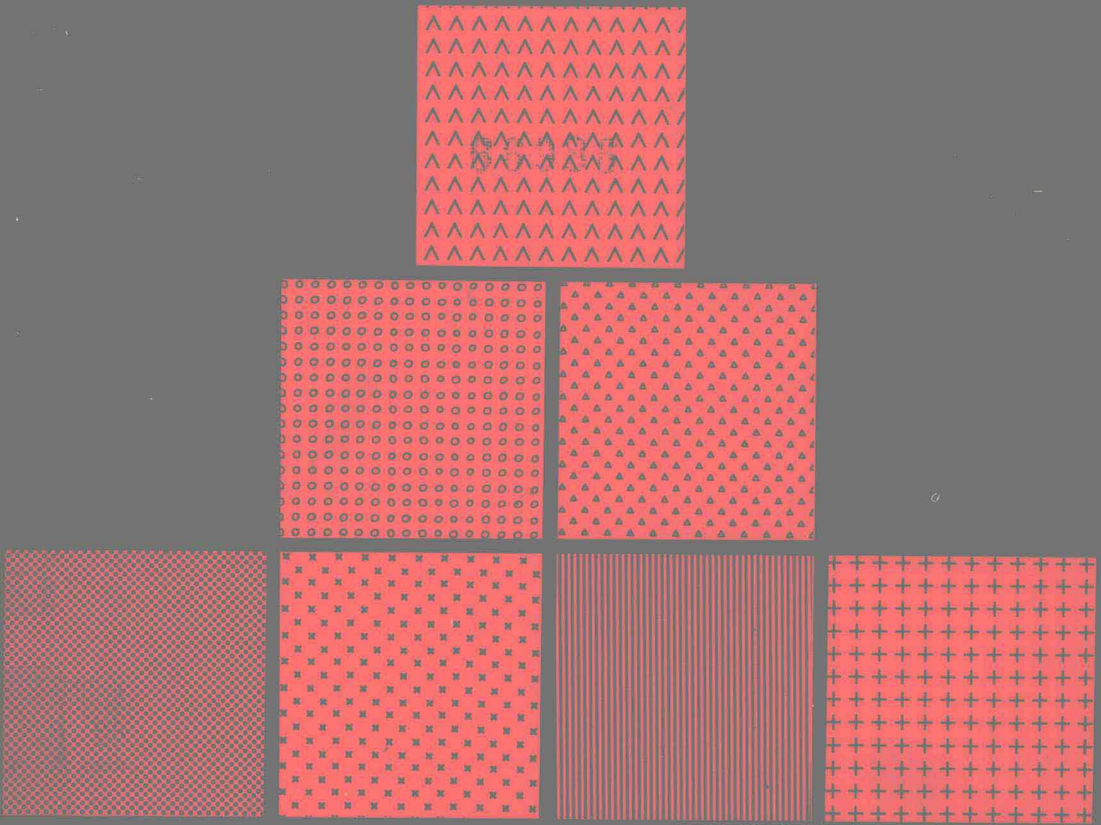
Human Resources Management

Cases and Readings

SECOND EDITION



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This edition is dedicated to the late Jim Aston MBE, coauthor of the first edition. "Sir James" became a university teacher at the age of 65 and his loss as a colleague, adviser and friend is still felt.

Preface to the second edition

Personnel management is all pervasive in organisational life. Every employee experiences personnel management — both good and bad. Every manager finds personnel management a key part of his job. This book is, therefore, not just for the personnel specialist, but for all who are involved in the management of others. This book, through a careful selection of readings and cases examines the major activities in personnel or human resources management. It aims to present current knowledge in the field in an accessible form and, through the related cases, provide students of personnel management and practising managers with an opportunity to sharpen their analytical and decision-making skills.

Personnel is a rapidly changing area of study. In particular, the past few years have seen dramatic changes in Australia and New Zealand in the areas of equal opportunity, safety, industrial relations, compensation and organisational development. The changing role and status of personnel management is reflected in the adoption of the term human resources management to describe the greater diversity of activities and increasingly high degree of professionalism that now characterise personnel management. To reflect these changes, the coverage of the text has been expanded with a new section on compensation and an almost completely new selection of readings. New cases have been added and old cases rewritten to tie in more closely with the text and to reflect current circumstances.

While this book is an attempt to provide an overview and can be used alone, it can also be used as a supplement to standard texts on personnel management.

Authors' Note

The authors wish to state that while the case material used in this text is based on actual situations, each case is in fact an amalgam of research, experience, reading and imagination. Consequently, no reference to, or criticism of, any particular organisation or individual is intended or implied.

For consistency, Australian spelling has been adopted throughout the book, with the exception of the titles of American books and articles which retain their original spelling.

Acknowledgments

We gratefully acknowledge the assistance received from Hugh MacLean, whose efforts and counsel have proved invaluable in producing this second edition. Similarly, we owe a debt of thanks to the Shell New Zealand Holding Company, who financially supported the development of this second edition. Without their assistance this book would not have been completed.

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CHAPTER 1

The case study method

The Case Study Method*

The case study method is a widely used learning technique. Essentially, a case is a written replication of an incident or a series of interrelated happenings in organisational life. Case analysis requires expertise in the analysis of situations and the determination of their implications for the organisation and the individual participants. The steps of case analysis are:

1. Problem definition
2. Statement of the facts
3. Statement of the alternatives
4. Evaluation of the alternatives
5. Selection of the best alternative
6. Recommendations for implementation
7. Suggestions for follow up
8. (Writing the case up as a report, if required)

The first seven steps form the suggested framework to be used. The purpose of the following suggestions is to assist in case analysis.

A case should first be read, in advance of the time when a detailed analysis is required. This allows the facts to "simmer" in the reader's mind.

When the actual case preparation begins, the case should be re-read. This time it should be read very carefully, with special attention being paid to developing a full understanding of its content. During the third reading the analysis should begin.

1. Problem definition

The most important step in problem solving is the selection of the problem one proposes to solve. Unless the relevant problem is chosen for analysis in the first place, one cannot hope to gain a viable solution. The wording of the problem definition should be simple, concise and unambiguous. One should aim for problem statements which are broad in scope, i.e. the initial statement of the problem should not restrict the range over which the analysis can be made. The reader must be aware of whose point of view he is adopting because people with differing objectives will define problems differently. Identification of specific problems in any situation as opposed to the overall general problem stated from the analyst's point of view is sometimes best left until the Statement of the Facts stage has been completed. It is often useful to think of terms of primary and secondary problems and/or short- and long-term problems. **The discovery and solution of basic, fundamental, or primary problems will go further than any other action to remove all the problems in a given problem area.** Failure to get at the root of the problem cluster and attempts to solve secondary problems will produce confused and contradictory answers. Breakdown of specific problems using these classifications should help students to organise the rest of their reports, sequence their recommendations and highlight key points when suggesting factors to follow up.

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* These notes outline an approach used by the Department of Business Administration, Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand and are based on material prepared by Mr P. Stannard.

2. Statement of the facts

Frequently the facts are incomplete and do not provide all the desired information. For practical purposes, however, no manager can wait for the accumulation of all the facts. He must make his decision on the basis of the facts at hand or on the basis of facts which can be obtained within the time and cost limitations of the situation.

Frequently there are situations in case analysis and in real-world decision making where more information can be generated from that already given. The process is normally deductive: "If such-and-such and so-and-so are true (and they are given as facts in the case), then it must be or may be true that . . ." By rubbing two pieces of information together, it is possible to generate insights that are important to a correct appreciation of the case.

Facts by themselves are of little use. The reader of the report or analysis must be assumed to be aware of the information given in the case. The recipient will be more interested in the analyst's judgments arising from the facts. Such judgments will normally concern the events, people or organisations depicted in the case. All the material facts in the case should be presented to support these conclusions. Do not omit any important facts or you may misrepresent the nature of the problem. Also, check each of the conclusions in turn to ensure that they form a consistent whole.

Some useful points to remember are:

(a) It is better to have a small number of highly significant facts than a large number of facts of a peripheral nature.

(b) Sound analysis depends on the degree of certainty of the existence of the facts as stated, the best measurement of the facts, and the degree of relevance of these facts to the problem situation.

(c) The analyst may make assumptions about essential but missing facts, provided these assumed facts are reasonable and are **explicitly** labelled as **assumed**.

(d) Remember do **not** list facts as they appear in the case and number them from 1 to 100. Try to group this evaluation and interpretation of the facts into logical subsections and use subheadings, e.g. organisational facts, people facts, operating facts, past action facts (in the correct sequence).

(e) The analyst may also draw on any relevant authoritative sources (properly referenced) to support his judgments, such as legal precedent, case history and readings.

Fact gathering and problem selecting really go hand in hand. One cannot settle on the problem for analysis until the facts are collated, nor can one decide which facts to gather until the problem is known. Case analysts should add to and change their focus until satisfied that the facts support the problem selection and that the problem can be solved on the basis of the facts collected. Remember that the stating of specific problems may well be quite distinct from the initial general problem statement which indicates the total scope of the problem area as it has been presented to you, the analyst. From this stage on, completely **unrelated** problems should be treated separately and gathered together again during the Recommendations for Implementation stage.

3. Statement of the alternatives

The next step is to list alternative courses of action. The greatest difficulty here is to choose from among the many alternatives, few of which one has time to analyse in depth. As a general rule, select from three to seven alternatives, spread the alternatives as broadly as possible over the entire spectrum of possible alternatives, choose at least one conservative and one radical alternative, and, on the basis of one's understanding of the case, choose alternatives which show promise of success. The status quo is invariably a useful alternative to consider. Improvements on the present situation can often form the basis of the evaluation stage.

Group alternatives if they apply to distinct problems. State all the alternatives before proceeding on to the evaluation stage. This is the best safeguard against overlooking obvious reasonable alternatives. Each alternative should be a complete answer to the problem for which it is a possible solution.

4. Evaluation of the alternatives

The next step in the analysis is to list all the advantages and disadvantages of each alternative. During this listing process, no thought should be given to the quality of the items on the list. Do not worry about values until you have generated the ideas. Then revise the lists for clarity and unity. Eliminate duplications, check for obvious omissions (an advantage of one alternative may well be an advantage or disadvantage of another and vice versa), eliminate insignificant items and attempt to evaluate the remaining items using quantitative methods wherever possible. Do not necessarily spend equal time and space on evaluating all the alternatives: some can usually be dismissed very quickly. When strictly quantitative evaluation is not possible, highlight the most significant advantages and disadvantages.

5. Selection of the best alternative

When selecting the best alternative, the process is mechanical if the evaluation has been conducted using solely quantitative techniques. If this is not the case, the major reasons for selection of that particular alternative should be clearly stated, especially the reasons why it has been selected ahead of the next best alternative.

6. Recommendations for implementation

The decision-making process has now been completed but this is only a paper solution. There still remains the question of putting the decision into practice. A sound decision, badly executed, may be worse than a bad decision, skilfully implemented. The chosen alternative should be placed into a timed sequence of conditional moves, i.e. a list of who does what to whom (or what), with what, how and in what order.

When the sound implementation is dependent on the correct attitude of the people involved, allowance should be made for this not being achieved, i.e. contingency plans should be presented that allow for a negative reaction or result.

Do not mix up evaluation with the recommendations for implementation. Be **specific** and **confident**. This is not the place for "perhaps" and "maybe". Beware of recommending that more information should be gathered. Conversely, at times it will not be possible to make a reasonable assumption concerning some important missing detail but in a case like this, specify precisely what further information must be gathered and why. The alternative actions that will follow, depending on the result of the information gathered, should also be specified. Check to ensure that the recommendations cover all distinct problem areas in a logical sequence and that they will also completely solve the overall problem.

7. Suggestions for follow up

Avoid general statements such as "keep an eye on the progress of the implementation of the recommendations". Present instead a brief but positive "follow-up program", relative to the recommendations. Only really vital sections of the analysis and/or recommendations should be highlighted at this stage to ensure that they receive special attention. You will be expected to explain briefly why they have been mentioned. Likely explanations could be perhaps for timing reasons or because an adverse decision could result in high costs being incurred.

8. Writing it up as a report

Major points to note are as follows:

(a) The content, nature and presentation of the report depend to a significant degree on the person who is to receive it. Such factors as the amount of theory, length, depth of analysis, use of specialised words (jargon) and the extent and nature of the individual criticism **should be adjusted to suit the recipient and his needs**, e.g. it is no use reporting to the General Manager and undiplomatically criticising his activities. This can be a very common fault in reports. A tactful presentation need not inhibit the validity of the report but some personal discipline is required when the report is being written.

(b) Plan the **outline** of the report before commencing. This consists basically of determining the headings and subheadings to be used, their sequence and their relative importance. These facts must be clearly reflected in the way the chosen headings are presented. Underlining, and the use of capitals, are common ways of achieving this objective. Avoid the use of multicolours. Be sparing in the use of red in conjunction with black or blue writing.

(c) The use of point form is also recommended especially when listing alternatives and stating recommendations. Ensure that the numbering (or lettering) system used is consistent and that it too reflects the relative importance of the particular list in the total report.

(d) It is almost impossible to use too many subheadings. An essay format is **not** an acceptable method for the presentation of a problem analysis and the complete absence of headings and subheadings inevitably leads to confusion.

(e) The seven stages in case analysis referred to earlier are the headings most frequently used.

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It is also desirable that subheadings be used, for example, when grouping the facts under the major heading, "Statement of Facts".

(f) All reports must have a bibliography attached to them indicating the source of material used. It should include the author's name, the title of the work consulted, the publisher's name, and the place and date of publication, e.g. Luthans, F., Organizational Behavior, 3rd edn, McGraw-Hill, Tokyo, 1982.

(g) All paraphrasing and quotations must be footnoted. When footnoting, it is only necessary to include the author's name, the title of the book and the relevant page number, e.g. Luthans, F., Organizational Behavior, p. 189.

(h) Creative thought and discussion from the analyst's own experience is welcome in report writing, but should be **controlled** by an awareness of authoritative writings on the topic. As a general rule, the writer's ideas should be illustrative of a main point and should not constitute the **only** empirical evidence of an argument being presented.

(i) The analyst should attach either a **title page** or a **covering letter** to the front of the report. The primary objective is to place the recommended action at the very beginning so that the person receiving the report, if he has absolute confidence in the reporter, can observe the recommended action immediately.

Title page

A suggested format for a title page is as follows:

TO:

J. Smith, General Manager,
Smith & Company

FROM:

T. Brown, Brown & Associates

DATE:

2 September 1984

SUBJECT:

Should Smith & Company diversify into the Widget market and, if so, what are the personnel requirements necessary for success?

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Smith & Company should:
1. (The list of recommendations
2. must also appear in the body
3. of the report)

Covering letter

A suggested format for a covering letter is as follows:

BROWN & ASSOCIATES,
Sydney.
2nd September, 1984.

Mr. J. Smith,
General Manager,
Smith & Company,
Brisbane.

Dear Mr. Smith,

Re: The Widget Proposal

As requested in your letter of 8th July, 1984, I have conducted a study into the viability of Smith & Company entering the Widget market and of the personnel requirements for successful entry into the market. My recommendations are as follows:

1.
2. etc.

A full report of my findings is enclosed.

Yours sincerely,

T. Brown
BROWN & ASSOCIATES.

CHAPTER 2

The personnel function

The Evolution of Personnel*

Edward J. Giblin
Principal
Arthur Young & Company
USA

We are witnessing a resurgence of interest in the personnel function.[1] An article in *Fortune* magazine has suggested that the personnel executive is the "new hero" of the corporation.[2] While that image may contain an element of journalistic hyperbole, there *is* evidence that the personnel function and its executives are gaining, at long last, greater stature in the organisational world. There have recently appeared a number of articles describing the transition the personnel function is going through, suggesting the broader role it will have, one that is fully integrated into the overall operations of the organisation.[3]

If this is so, then now is the time to examine the personnel function and how it has evolved — to try to identify those forces that have exerted a major influence on the evolution of the personnel function. By better understanding how the current function came to be, we may gain insight into what it is evolving into. Such insight may help us to avoid some of the pitfalls that lie ahead and even to maximise opportunities that may develop as the function evolves.

In developing his theory of the evolution of management's labour relations policies, Richard Lester noted that there was "no pattern of inevitable evolution".[4] Similarly, while the article suggests certain stages in the evolution of the personnel function, there is no intent to claim any pattern of inevitability of this so-called evolution.

A history of reaction

The central truth of the evolution of the personnel function is that each stage was brought about by external forces — forces outside the function. The personnel fraternity has been, throughout its history, in a reactive posture, devoting itself, for the most part, to catching up with changes brought about by societal influences. Seldom, if ever, have major developments in the field resulted from the initiative of personnel practitioners.

A second major point to be developed is that the forces to date have engendered relatively well-structured changes for the function. For the most part, those involved in the function merely had to learn what was required and gradually, often very

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* Reprinted with permission from *Human Resources Management* 17, 3, 1978, pp. 25–30.

gradually, adopt these new ideas, techniques, and realities within their organisations. In the near future, the outside forces may not be so accommodating; they could present the personnel function with a host of unstructured changes that will require far greater insight and initiative than were required in the past.

Phase I: The reaction to the growth of labour unions

In his classic work on labour/management relations at McCormick and International Harvester, Robert Ozanne noted:

> The evolution of a mature trade union philosophy among workers at the McCormick and International Harvester plants clearly preceded the evolution by management of an employee relations philosophy. Management's education in employee relations was forced upon it piecemeal by its unpleasant experience with unions.[5]

Ozanne's history demonstrates that the union took the initiatives in improving wages, hours, and many aspects of working conditions. Only when management came to accept the permanence of unions, as well as the influence they had on corporate policies, did they begin to develop their own employee and labour relations policies.

Many students of business and labour history have suggested that Ozanne's findings are reflective of the experience of a large portion of American industry. There are few known instances prior to the 1920s of a corporate personnel function preceding the company's unionisation.

In a real sense, labour unions gave birth to the personnel function in industry. Initially, the function was a pure reaction to a threat and an attempt to alleviate it. When corporate attempts at creating alternatives to unions failed, as they almost universally did, personnel began to develop into a function in its own right. While even today personnel departments in unionised corporations, particularly in industrial organisations, still exist largely to countervail the influence of the unions, their current role extends beyond this narrow and defensive purpose. This broader role for personnel grew out of pressure from other external influences.

Phase II: The reaction to the growing size and complexity of organisations and the advent of the behavioural sciences in industry

No precise time-frame can be assigned to this phase. Following the Civil War, certain industries began to increase rapidly in size and complexity. (Social scientists had shown some interest in industry as far back as the Industrial Revolution.) In terms of its impact on the personnel function, however, the phase can be dated from the late 1920s to the late 1960s.

The growth and complexity of organisations created two basic areas of interest for behavioural scientists.

1. First was the management-oriented issue of what structure and management processes were required to achieve the coordination and cooperation required to manage large organisations. The early work of Chester Barnard and the "MBO School" of Drucker, Odiorne, Humble, and Reddin responded to this problem. More recently, the work of Lawrence and Lorsch and others on contingency approaches to organising and managing is in the same vein.
2. Closely related to the interest in management and organisation was the concern over the impact of the work place on employees. The early work of the human relations movement, as exemplified by the Hawthorne studies and the work of Elton Mayo, were illustrative of this movement. This concern led to a variety of behavioural-science-based techniques. Group-dynamics approaches such as the T-Group, job enrichment approaches, theories of more humanistic approaches to leadership such as those espoused by McGregor, Likert, and Maslow, were incorporated into the business vernacular and used in a variety of new personnel specialties and departments.

The new personnel function plays a role in such specialties as

- designing jobs to increase their motivational content;
- administering MBO programs and training managers to employ this technique;
- the planning of executive succession and the development of career paths for young managers to follow to the top (or wherever they "peak out");
- counselling employees on job-related and non-job-related problems.

In the majority of cases, the new theories and approaches were developed by behavioural scientists in universities, who exported them to industry as writers and consultants. In many instances, they have gone so far as to "package" their concepts — developed training manuals, exercise materials, and professionally produced colour films. Management development and training groups within personnel departments were the major consumers of these "packages".

Admittedly, many of the changes involving individuals as well as organisations resulting from this phase were more cosmetic than substantive. It is fair to say, though, that the average organisation is more sensitive to the needs of its employees than its counterpart of 30 years ago. Some of these changes can be attributed to the influence of the behavioural sciences on industry. However, the most obvious and undeniable impact of this phase was to broaden the scope of the personnel function and to enhance its role in the organisation.

The impact of this phase in the evolution of the personnel function is still strongly felt today. Granted, many practical executives have grown wary of the claims of the more ardent behavioural scientists. Yet, most of their organisations have been impacted by these theories and approaches, which have also created a more dynamic personnel function in many corporations. It also brought into the personnel function a new breed of specialist often highly trained in the behavioural sciences. Recently, many new ideas and approaches have begun to come out of corporate personnel departments. This is a healthy and long overdue change, the first sign of a more proactive posture for this function.

Phase III: The reaction to government's intervention into the personnel area

Government has been involved in matters affecting personnel policies and practices for many years; for instance, regulations concerning the treatment of child labour go back more than a century. However, the real impact of government on the personnel function came in the late 1960s with the passage of legislation and the issuance of Executive Orders directed at eliminating discrimination in employment.[6]

Previous employment legislation, such as the wage and hour laws, required relatively simple changes in policies, and careful and extensive recordkeeping. They did not require any fundamental change in employment systems. Not so with the equal employment legislation and regulations.

What attracts most attention are the law suits and large financial settlements that major employers have been subjected to in recent years. However, in reality this has been relatively trivial when compared with the changes these laws and regulations have begun to force on the manner in which employment systems (policies, procedures and practices) function. Virtually all aspects of the personnel function have been subjected to close analytical scrutiny; recruitment practices, hiring criteria, promotion and transfer policies, the administration of training and educational programs, compensation practices, and the nature of benefit plans are only illustrative of the areas that have been impacted.

The challenge to the personnel function stems from the aspects of the law that usually place upon them the burden of demonstrating that all policies, criteria, and practices are manifestly job-related. That is, that all personnel decisions that affect employees must be clearly based on the fundamental requirements of the job or jobs involved. In fact, even mere mechanical compliance with Executive Order 11246 and its administrative supplements has proven to be a difficult — even, at times, an impossible — task for most personnel departments.

The personnel function was forced to become more proficient in a number of disciplines. Determining the job-relatedness of job specifications required increased emphasis on job task analysis techniques. The use of test or other hiring criteria forced personnel specialists to become more familiar with validation studies, many requiring sophisticated statistical methodology. The new reporting requirements gave greater impetus to the already developing area of computer-based personnel systems. Successful maintenance of a non-discriminatory employment system required the collection and quantitative analysis of large amounts of personal data, as well as the systems to monitor the progress, or lack of it, achieved by the system.

Overall, these laws and regulations engendered the need for a much more analytical, technically sophisticated personnel function. Again, it was left to regulatory agencies and the courts to describe what had to be done, often in elaborate procedural detail, and the personnel function had to react to the new demands forced upon it. Now, personnel people had to show why a high school degree was required of a plant labourer, or drop the requirement. Now, they had to question and explain, if possible, why policy required someone to be in a position for five years before becoming eligible to move to the next higher job. Ironically, professional and business reasons should have compelled personnel specialists to study and resolve such issues many years before the passage of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act. But, for the most part, it had never been done! Now, however wrongly and ineptly, government regulators and federal judges were restructuring personnel policies and practices, and the personnel function was and still is haphazardly trying to keep up with these external pressures.

New forces in the evolution of the personnel function: a stringent environment — a disillusioned workforce

The adage that the past is prologue may hold only partially true regarding the future direction of the personnel function. As was true in the past, changes in the function will, to a large degree, be forced upon it by outside forces. However these new forces are likely to present greater difficulties than those in the past. In particular, it appears that the problems they will create for the personnel function will be less structured than was true in the past. There will be no unions, behavioural scientists, or government agencies to structure the tasks to be accomplished, though each of these groups is likely to be involved, to varying degrees, in the future of the personnel function. If the personnel function is to cope with the new environment, it will have to take the initiative itself, adopting a proactive as opposed to its longstanding reactive posture.

Most economists forecast generally slower rates of growth for the economy in the foreseeable future. Many reasons are given in support of this view — in particular, the sharply rising cost of energy. Simultaneously, labour costs are increasing and there have been few gains in worker productivity over the last decade. Dislocations will occur in many sectors of the economy, impacting individuals and organisations. The workforce will perhaps be severely impacted. There are already signs of this: a continuing high rate of unemployment; the inability of thousands of recent college graduates to find jobs in the occupations formerly open to the college-educated, the pronounced softening of demand for middle management jobs in business, and the levelling off of demand for jobs in the public sector.

In sum, the environment for employment, as well as the outlook, has become markedly less favourable for large segments of the United States workforce. Equally problematical is the growing disillusionment of the people — the employed as well as the unemployed — with our institutions. Political parties, churches, government agencies, and corporations seem to be competing in the public opinion polls for the title of Least Trusted Form of Institution. The "perceived evils" that underlie this situation are many, but among the leaders on any list would be Watergate, Vietnam, corporate bribery and other corrupt practices of business and government. Even conservative Republican politicians are making an issue of getting tough with "well-to-do white collar criminals".

As for the employees in general, the day is gone when their loyalty and commitment can be taken for granted, notwithstanding the difficult economic environment. Far too much publicity has been given to the $600 000 executive compensation packages for those on the lower levels to acquiesce without question or complaint in accepting modest compensation and long tenure in the same, or virtually the same, position.

A look ahead

Just what does the future hold for the personnel function? No one can say with certainty, but it is likely that the personnel function will be faced with some difficult dilemmas for which there appear to be no simple solutions.

For example, the central problem will probably be how to increase the productivity of the workforce, particularly professional and managerial personnel in an era of relatively stringent resources. In other words:

How to obtain more output while able to offer fewer rewards than before?

This issue will be especially problematical at lower and middle levels of management where, first, the supply of such personnel relative to a declining demand will hold down their wages and, second, upward mobility within the organisation will be reduced, fewer people will be promoted and real promotions will be less frequent than they are today. Of course, many ardent advocates of the behavioural science approaches to management will perceive this dilemma as an opportunity to forward one cause or another. Such responses will emphasise certain intrinsic motivators: the enjoyment of the work itself, increased recognition for a job well done, and so on. One should not discount these possibilities. They do motivate many persons, to some degree. But it must be recognised that what little evidence exists suggests that, where material (extrinsic) rewards are lacking, intrinsic motivators will have, at best, a minor impact on the individual's desire to achieve higher levels of performance.

How, then, can the personnel function contribute to improved productivity in this kind of environment? Perhaps the answer lies in another problem — one that involves similar considerations — put forth by Arch Patton.[7] It is, he suggests, a problem that is beginning to confront organisations and particularly the personnel function. It appears that the declining demand for lower and middle level managers, which will hold down wage rates for these positions, may be perceived as "manna from heaven". In these turbulent times, who would quarrel with a trend that promises to cut the cost of a major item such as payroll? But, Patton says, we would do well to look closer at this development. For example, what will be the reaction of younger, better-educated jobholders when they realise that adverse circumstances beyond their control are limiting their material progress? Patton observes that the collective reaction may well be to band together to protect their interests — unions by whatever name. Again, what can the personnel function do to countervail this possibility?

A similar dilemma is posed by the narrowing gap between the incomes of young professionals and blue-collar workers in many industries. In a recent study of an oil refinery, the author noted that basically untrained high school graduates were being paid starting wages as high as those offered to new chemical engineering graduates! And the blue-collar workers were paid for overtime work while the engineers — who often worked more than 40 hours a week — were not. This resulted in many of the newly hired, unskilled (or semi-skilled) blue-collar workers earning more than engineers with as much as three or four years with the company. Most of the engineers expressed considerable dismay over the situation. Local management's response was to assure them that in the long run they would surely outpace the earnings of blue-collar workers. That response is somehow reminiscent, in this context, of Keynes's dictum that in the long run we are all dead.

These examples illustrate the uncertain and problematical environment in which the personnel function will have to operate for the foreseeable future. The so-called "new heroes" of the corporation will have to help management become more responsive to the complex and dynamic environment whose dimensions no one can as yet fully describe. It seems likely, if not certain, that unions and government will prove less-than-helpful sources of guidance in addressing the real issue. Behavioural scientists may provide some assistance, but they will offer, for the most part, techniques for coping with the issues, not help in solving the fundamental dilemmas of the socioeconomic environment which generates these issues.

It can be argued that behavioural scientists have already provided a reasonable level of technology for coping. The point is moot, for the general truth is that rarely, if ever, is the technology brought to bear. As the late British economist/philosopher E. F. Schumacher so aptly noted:

> At present, there can be little doubt that the whole of mankind is in mortal danger, not because we are short of scientific and technological know-how, but because we tend to use it destructively, without wisdom.[8]

If it is time for the personnel function to act, rather than remain in its reactive posture, what must be done? There is no simple answer to this question, as any thoughtful and experienced personnel executive will readily affirm. There are, however, some general directions the function must begin to take. At a minimum, they include:

1. **Assume a leadership role in the management of the firm's human resources.**

"But", you say, "isn't this what the personnel function already does in most organisations?" Hardly! For too long the function has served only to attempt to justify and rationalise management's position regarding the use and development of human resources. As noted above, there are signs that, at least in some organisations, this situation is changing: personnel executives are beginning to play a leadership role in human resource management. This is a hopeful beginning, but anyone familiar with the field will recognise that it is the exception, not the rule. Much more needs to be done in most organisations.

2. **Anticipate problems on the near horizon and create an awareness and a sense of urgency toward them within the organisation.**

One will always be in a posture of reacting if one does not anticipate the problems and deal with the issues. To get out of a reactive mode requires the creation of a general awareness of the major problems and issues among top management; eventually, management's support must be enlisted if a personnel/management mode is to become truly anticipatory and active. Along the same line, in many instances it will be necessary to gain union support as well. This involves, of course, the exercise of the leadership role described above.

There is no simple model for enabling personnel executives to anticipate human resource problems and issues. Although it may sound like a cliche, what is required is an open mind, a spirit of inquiry, and the ability to look beyond what is happening in the corporation as the benchmark of all reality. Too many executives in all functions are so focussed on what happens within the corporation that they seldom look outside it to see and understand new developments taking shape in the society.

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