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Career Management of Employees in SMEs and Austrian MNCs with Specific Respect to HR 2.0 – An Enterprise Perspective

130 - Organizational Response to Globally Driven Institutional Changes

Abstract

Human Resource Management (short HR Management) as a support process for the core processes of a company's value chain has an influence not only on the productivity of the employees, but also on the company's turnover and profitability as well as on its corporate financial performance in general. It is therefore essential for both the entrepreneur of a Small and Medium Sized Enterprise and HR Manager of an internationally operating enterprise to deal with topics such as Recruiting, Onboarding, Talent Management and Employer Branding. This paper aims to identify general components of Human Resource Management, and aims furthermore, specifically to establish the process changes in HR Management in the last decades. Moreover, it will also show that traditional HR Management has already reached the 'next level'; HR 2.0 is particularly shaped by the impact of social media and software applications. By means of qualitative research and conducting interviews (N = 17), the dimension of enterprises that are already aware of the term 'HR 2.0' is to be investigated and in a further context, the research shall most notably elaborate on the economic sector and the company size for which HR 2.0 is of relevance. Finally, it is to be evaluated to what extent Generation Y has increasingly impacted the labour market and the imminent period of the 'Industry 4.0'. This is a period mainly characterized by the digitalization of the production process. This paper will examine what has triggered these changes in HR Management and in what way the characteristics of Generation Y and Industry 4.0 will cause further changes in HR Management respectively.

Keywords:

Human Resource Management 2.0, Social Media, Software Applications, Generation Y, Talent Management, Employer Branding, Industry 4.0

1. Introduction:

Since human capital and employee performance is to be seen as a key component for productivity and outcome, decisions in the field of career planning and career management of employees in companies highly influence the level of firm performance and its organizational effectiveness generally. (Huselid 1995: 635 ff, Becker / Gerhart 1996: 780, Datta et al. 2005: 135). However, technological development, industrial revolutions and the general demographic change during the last century has

had a crucial impact on the management of employees from a firm's perspective and has hence led to significant conversion in the context of Human Resource Management (Datta et al. 2005: 135, Salmen / Rath 2012: 57 ff, Faliagka et al. 2012: 551, Eckhardt et al. 2014: 415 ff, Forstner / Dümmler 2014: 199). On the one hand, technological trends, such as changes of the scope of information technology and changes in the expansion of machinery and industry are the forces, which have caused movements in the processing of Human Resource Management (Datta et al. 2005: 135). On the other hand, there are social trends, which have also fundamentally changed human resource practices in the past, as for example changes in value between different generations. We shall devote special attention in this regard to Generation Y, to the migration attached to a so-called 'Brain Drain and Gain' and, to the fact that markets have become more global and dynamic (Salmen / Rath 2012: 66 f). Taking these two aspects into account, Human Resource Management has evolved and has by now reached the next level where other issues need to be considered than in the traditional field of human resources' purview (Datta et al. 2005: 135, Bell et al. 2006: 295 f, Salmen / Rath 2012: 65 ff). Thus, this second stage of Human Resource Management – commonly known as HR '2.0' (Salmen / Rath 2012: 32) – is strongly characterized by the integration of social media networks and software applications into daily HR practices (Tong / Sivanad 2005: 103 f, Doherty 2010: 11, Faliagka et al. 2012: 551, Eckhardt et al. 2014: 415, Salmen / Rath 2012: 30 ff), but also by a general shift from a prior focus on operational and administrative task towards a focus on a more strategic approach to Human Resource Management (Datta et al. 2005: 135, Findikli et al. 2015: 387). According to Salmen & Rath (2012) this strategic approach to Human Resource Management will prospectively shed needed light on terms such as Talent Management and Employer Branding. In addition to that concept, other sources state that what can be described as the Industry 4.0 actually represents more or less the same as HR 2.0. Hence, the fourth revolution of the industrial sector is what has finally determined the evolvement of HR 2.0, which suggests that these two terms are actually interdependent (Picot / Neuburger 2013: 13, Hartmann / Wischmann 2014: 9).

2. Research Questions:

Consequently, this paper aims to investigate these fields of study with respect to the Austrian economy and shall subsequently provide answers to the following research questions:

- How will the increasing penetration of the labor market by Generation Y have an impact on Talent Management and Employer Branding (both seen as part of Human Resource Management) in Austrian enterprises?

- In what way will the Industry 4.0 have an impact on the further development of Human Resource Management in Austrian enterprises?

- To what extent is HR 2.0 already established among Austrian enterprises? Which economic sectors and what company size are of particular relevance?

3. Explanation of Topic-Related Terminology:

In order to ensure a better understanding of the origin of this topic and the final research results, the following paragraphs will shortly elaborate on the most important terms related to the purpose of this research and the defined research questions presented above.

3.1. Talent Management

Talent Management is to be seen as a rather modern component of Human Resource Management that, according to Sahai and Srivastava (2012), emerged especially from the mid-1990s onwards. Moreover, in accordance with various other sources (Tarique / Schuler 2010: 123, Altmöz et al. 2013: 843, Gümüs et al. 2013: 807, Vaiman / Collings 2013: 1738, Sireesha / Ganapavarapu 2014: 54) Talent Management has mainly developed due to factors such as increased global competition, fast evolving technologies and the enormous growth of emerging markets and therefore is to be seen as parallel evolution in Human Resource Management, specifically as a synonym for HR 2.0 (Gümüs et al. 2013: 795). The term basically describes the employment of the right person at the right place and time (Altmöz et al. 2013: 844) and therefore involves practices as for example the identification, development, appraisal, deployment and retention of high-performing and high-potential employees within a certain field of work (Sahai / Srivastava 2012: 241).

3.2. Employer Branding

With regard to what has just been stated, attracting and retaining talented human capital has become one of the most important sources for a firm in order to gain competitive advantage in today's highly evolved and globalized environment (Alniacik / Alniacik 2012: 1336, Sivertzen et al. 2013: 473, Chhabra / Sharma 2014: 52). At the same time, the latest research has shown that the labor and skill shortage will continue within the next years (Chhabra / Sharma 2014: 49). As a result, companies at all levels will do their utmost to win the war for talent (Alniacik / Alniacik 2012: 1336). Furthermore, job seekers often use corporate reputation when applying for a new job (Sivertzen et al. 2013: 474) and it is proven by various sources (Davies 2008: 667, Alniacik et al. 2014: 337, Chhabra / Sharma 2014: 54) that a strong employer brand attracts more talented applicants. Apart from that, companies with a strong employer brand can consequently reduce the costs of employee acquisition, improve employee relations, increase employee retention and even offer lower salaries for comparable staff to firms with weaker employer brands (Alniacik / Alniacik 2012: 1337). To conclude, Employer Branding is another important factor in the successful execution of Talent Management and therefore – as was the case with Talent Management – the idea of Employer Branding emerged in the mid-1990s when the core principles of marketing were being applied to the field of Human Resource Management in specific enterprises for the first time (i.e. when the concept of internal marketing was developed as well (Alniacik / Alniacik 2012: 1337).

3.3. The Generation Y and its Characteristics

What needs to be investigated next for the purpose of this study is Generation Y, a term roughly applied to all the people born between 1980 and 2000 (Salmen / Rath 2012). In general, each generation shares a common perspective meaning that as a generation matures, it develops certain characteristics, which distinguish it from previous generations with regard to personality traits, work values, attitudes and motivation. As for Generation Y, it is important to mention that its members are crucially shaped by the consequences of a lot of recent evolutions, trends and historical events. For instance, members have experienced a rapid advance in communication technologies and social networking in their early years. Moreover, Generation Y was exposed to long periods of economic prosperity, growth and globalization on the one hand, but also to a period of economic uncertainty and the worst global recession since 1929 on the other (Bolton et al. 2013: 245 ff).

The interaction of these demographic changes mentioned above finally caused Generation Y to become more skeptical, blunt and impatient compared to their predecessors. The Generation Y is hence known for questioning particular circumstances in their life and global economic environment (Bolton et al. 2013: 252). In that context, Generation Y is often associated with phrases such as 'they want it all' and 'they want it now', suggesting that they attach a high level of importance to a wide array of items, especially in the working environment. Concretely, this means that the members of Generation Y do not only pay a lot of attention to rapid advancement, interesting and challenging work and flexible working hours, but also to good pay, additional benefits and the prospect of an acceptable work-life balance. (Ng et al. 2010: 282 ff, Lee / Hung et al. 2012: 705, Luscombe et al. 2013: 282, Bolton et al. 2013: 247).

3.4. Industry 4.0

The term Industry 4.0 was first uttered in the public sphere in October 2011 at a technology fair in Hannover, Germany, giving a name to what is felt to be the Fourth Industrial Revolution[1] (Kagermann et al. 2011). This Fourth Industrial Revolution is mainly de facto characterized by greater flexibility and a higher cross-linking degree of available information through real-time communication facilitated by the internet and smart technology (Picot / Neuburger 2013: 2; Binner 2014: 230). In other words, the core of the Industry 4.0 is the increased implementation of software technologies and intelligent machines into an organization's physical processes of the value chain – regardless of whether it is about core, management or support processes (Lee / Kao et al. 2014: 3). Thus, the Industry 4.0 aims at connecting information that has been treated separately so far, since the availability of continuous and consistent data within an organization is one of the most important prerequisites in order to successfully design optimization models in today's business environment (Binner 2014: 230 f).

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[1] First Industrial Revolution: 1750 → use of water and steam power for manufacturing
Second Industrial Revolution: 1880 → assembly line work
Third Industrial Revolution: 1970 → implementation of electrical devices and computers

4. Empirical Analysis

Having provided an overview of topic-related terminology, the specific research questions will thus be resolved by conducting 17 in-depth interviews with experts in the field of HR as well as corporate management. Secondly, the conversations will be transcribed, paraphrased and encoded following the model of qualitative content analysis according to Mayring (2015) and finally evaluated and interpreted.

4.1. Findings with Regard to Generation Y

Subsequently, the first research question concerning Talent Management and Employer Branding in connection to the Generation Y entering the labor market shall be resolved.

Circumstances in Regard of Generation Y	Number of Conversations Where a Specific Statement was Made	Number of Conversations in % of Total Number of Conversations.
Generation Y attaches higher importance to work-life balance.	7	41%
Generation Y is more flexible in terms of working time.	6	35%
Generation Y attaches less importance to compensation and additional benefits (e.g. company car, own office) as long as the work itself is challenging and exciting.	4	24%
The increasing work-life balance that Generation Y attaches high importance to causes people to work more efficiently.	2	12%
Generation Y is more focused on its needs and will therefore quit an inconvenient job more quickly.	3	18%
Generation Y is more curious and adventuresome than previous generations and will therefore quit a job more quickly.	5	29%
Recent changes in national labor law (e.g. the change with regard to the clearance system) caused Generation Y to demonstrate less corporate loyalty.	1	6%
Generation Y is partly ambivalent; to some extent they really work hard in order to achieve their targets, on the other hand they are more skeptical in terms of how many hours they want to spend at work a day.	1	6%
The lack of loyalty on part of Generation Y is only in response to a lack of loyalty that has been initiated on part of the employers (e.g. with regard to financial crises in recent years).	2	12%
Due to the generational change and the characteristics of Generation Y (e.g. the lack of corporate loyalty), Talent Management will gain importance in the future.	3	18%
Due to the generational change and the characteristics of Generation Y (e.g. the lack of corporate loyalty), Employer Branding will gain importance in the future.	4	24%

First of all, it was stated in 41 percent of the conversations that Generation Y attaches particular importance to work-life balance. Further characteristic accounting for Generation Y are, however, a greater flexibility in terms of working times (as stated in 35 percent of the conversations) and a lower focus on compensation and additional benefits, such as a company car or an own office, as long as the work itself is challenging and exciting (as mentioned in 24 percent of the conversations). Moreover, the lack of corporate loyalty that Generation Y is often accused of may indeed exist. Acutally, the reasons for that vary as revealed by the findings presented below. For instance, according to what was stated in almost one third of the conversations (29 percent), Generation Y is more curious and adventuresome, seeks to gain experience in more than one working environment and will therefore quit a job faster than previous generations used to do. In another 18 percent of the conversations,

however, the interviewed persons mentioned that the members of Generation Y are more focused on their individual needs and have a more precise idea of how their life should look. As a result, an inconvenient job will be terminated more quickly. Furthermore, there is also the consideration that recent changes in national labour law caused Generation Y to have less corporate loyalty, as for example the change with regard to the clearance system. Apart from that, it was also stated that the lack of loyalty on part of Generation Y is only a response to a lack of loyalty that was initiated by the employers (e.g. with regard to financial crises in recent years). To sum it up, there are indeed several approaches trying to justify the lack of corporate loyalty on part of Generation Y. Nevertheless, employers will have to attach higher importance to Talent Management and Employer Branding in the future as stated in approximately 25 percent of the conversations.

4.2. Findings with Regard to the Industry 4.0

Furthermore, there is the need to focus on the findings of the research with regard to the Industry 4.0 and its effects on the working environment of the future, which has been revealed.

The Industry 4.0 and the Influence on the Working Environment	Number of Conversations Where a Specific Statement was Made	Number of Conversations in % of Total Number of Conversations.
Technological changes and increasing digitalization caused by the Industry 4.0 will require a higher level of knowledge and self-responsibility on part of the employees across all industry sectors.	12	71%
Due to the increasing requirements in aptly handling technological devices and big data caused by the Industry 4.0, the compulsory school system needs to be adapted.	2	12%
Due to massive automation, the Industry 4.0 will cause a reduction in administrative jobs where a low level of expertise or creativity is required.	5	29%
The trends shaping the Industry 4.0 are nothing new; however they have just been denominated recently.	2	12%
The trends accounting for the Industry 4.0 are basically the same as those that can be attributed to HR 2.0 (e.g. faster, easier, more efficient and more cross-linked handling of processes), suggesting that the evolvement of HR 2.0 and the Industry 4.0 are strongly interdependent.	3	18%
The trends accounting for the Industry 4.0 have had only marginal impacts on our industry sector so far.	5	29%
Actually, the Industry 4.0 will change the working environment in all industry sectors; however the direct effect on HR management is rather low.	1	6%
Through the Industry 4.0, the artificial intelligence research will gain importance; therefore more intelligent search algorithms and machines being similar to humans will determine the direction of the labor market in the future.	2	12%
The Industry 4.0 will massively foster the existence of the 'glass human being' and will therefore cause a shift of power to the employers on the labor market.	2	12%
The Industry 4.0 especially enhances the variable combination of big data, resulting in the fact that new objectives will be formed on a constant basis.	1	6%
The means provided by the Industry 4.0 will cause the working process to be streamlined.	1	6%

It was mentioned in 12 out of 17 conversations conducted for this interview (71 percent) that technological changes and increasing digitalization caused by the Industry 4.0 will require a higher level of knowledge and self-responsibility on part of the employees across all industry sectors.

Actually, in 12 percent of the conversations it was even stated that due to the increasing requirements to stay abreast of technological devices and big data caused by the Industry 4.0, the compulsory school system needs to be adapted so as to satisfy the requirements of the working environment of the future. Nevertheless, in about 30 percent of the conversations it was stated that the trends accounting for the Industry 4.0 have only had marginal impacts on the particular company's industry sector so far. Yet still, there are several other outstanding issues in the context of the Industry 4.0 that were mentioned by the interviewed persons. For example, almost 30 percent stated that due to massive automation, the Industry 4.0 will cause a reduction in administrative jobs where a low level of expertise or creativity is required. Moreover, 18 percent of the interviewed persons are of the opinion that the trends accounting for the Industry 4.0 are basically the same that can be attributed to HR 2.0, suggesting that the evolvement of HR 2.0 and the Industry 4.0 are strongly interdependent. Apart from that, as it was stated in approximately 10 percent of the conversations, the Industry 4.0 will massively foster the existence of the 'glass human being' and will therefore cause a shift in power to the employers on the labor market. Another interesting aspect that was mentioned four times in two conversations is that through the Industry 4.0, artificial intelligence research will gain importance and therefore more intelligent search algorithms and machines harbouring similar skills to humans' will determine the direction of the labor market in the future.

4.3. Findings with Regard to the Dissemination and Implementation of HR 2.0

Of ultimate importance, one needs to pay attention to the third research question and the current meaning and implementation of HR 2.0 in Austrian companies.

Embodiment and Meaning of HR 2.0	Number of Conversations Where a Specific Statement was Made	Number of Conversations in % of Total Number of Conversations.
The term HR 2.0 is known and it means the increasing integration of business partner concept into HR departments (i.e. a shift towards a more strategic approach to HR activities)	4	24%
The term HR 2.0 is known and it means a facilitation of HR activities through the implementation of software applications and social media.	6	35%
The term HR 2.0 is known and it means the increased integration of employees into administrative HR activities by the use of software applications, while HR managers function rather as a strategic intermediary.	3	18%
The term HR 2.0 is known and it is mainly associated with certain attributes accounting for the increasing digitalization generally (e.g. 'faster', 'easier', 'more mobile', 'more efficient' and 'more cross-linked').	3	18%
The term HR 2.0 is known and it does not only refer to a facilitation of all HR practices through social media, but the Employer Branding can be facilitated as well by the means that HR 2.0 provides.	3	18%
The means provided by HR 2.0 can more easily be implemented in larger and expanding companies.	3	18%
The term HR 2.0 was not known before.	3	24%

In that context, HR 2.0 represents either a facilitation of Human Resource Management practices through the implementation of software applications or social media (mentioned in 35 percent of the conversations), or the increasing integration of business partner concepts into HR departments.

Furthermore, in 18 percent of the conversations it was stated that HR 2.0 can be significantly associated with certain attributes such as 'faster', 'easier', 'more mobile', 'more efficient' and 'more cross-linked', accounting for the increasing digitalization in all industry sectors in general. At the same time, there were three conversations where the term HR 2.0 was not known and had to be explained before a statement with regard to its meaning could be made. These companies were either SMEs or a company operating in a less research-related industry sector. Moreover, it was mentioned five times in three conversations that the implementation of the means provided by HR 2.0 can be arranged in larger or expanding companies more easily. Actually, these results reveal that HR 2.0 is more widespread among larger companies with a more complex company structure and more technical issues to deal with. In turn, in 24 percent of the conversations it was mentioned that the means provided by HR 2.0 are more intensively used among the younger generations and in companies with younger management boards, suggesting that the extent to which HR 2.0 is implemented in Austrian enterprises does not only depend on industry sector or size, but also on generational aspects. To conclude, HR 2.0 is definitely in line with the project-oriented and more dynamic organization and not in line with traditional organisations, where a lot of attention is still paid to steep hierarchies and an inelastic business environment remains in place. Therefore, if a company fails to adapt the current trends with regard to Human Resource Management into its existing company structures, they will subsequently fail to procure the best talents on the market place as compared to other globally operating enterprises and, so these companies are likely to lose competitive advantage in the long run.

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