



Original Article: HR MANAGEMENT IN AFRICAN COUNTRIES: FROM TRANSACTIONAL TO TRANSFORMATIONAL

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1. Introduction

People issues are very important in today's business agenda around the world and African continent is not an exception to this rule, but as these issues become more important to business leaders, there is growing tension between the needs of companies and HR's ability to fulfill them. These are important issues:

Why in Mali and many other third world countries HR departments are still struggling to be recognized and do not contribute too much to the development of companies?

How does an HR department move from being reactive to being proactive? How can they move to being strategic?

The answer is as it follows:

- to be transformational, not transactional,
- to think about their structures,
- to be credible –have knowledgeable, experienced, trained HR practitioners,
- to provide value for service.

2. Be transformational, not transactional

2.1 Being transformational

What I mean is that HR departments should be focused on actions that are strategic, forward-thinking, proactive and comprehensive. Only by this means they can change to the sustainable development.

They can improve their positions on the markets by making changes to themselves, or making changes in the way their departments interact within the organizations. African public and private sectors need it for winning their place in to the global market.

2.2 Being transactional

When the HR department is only focused on administrative tasks and its activities center on hiring, orientation, training and development, compensation and benefits, payroll, health and safety, employee relations and labour relation, charitable endeavors as it is the case in many growing companies in sub-Saharan countries, it can be considered as transactional.

Often HR departments proclaim that they perform these activities in a strategic way at the same time these activities are not at the executive table. What they need to understand is that the simple use of the word "strategic" cannot turn transactional HR department into transformational one. Being transformational means approaching the work in the HR department in different way: being opened to workers and customers, being socially responsible, having effective communication system,

being involved in fundamentally different strategic activities.

2.2 The HR department is a staff, not a line department!

Line departments are essential to survival of the organization. To use a company which produces fertilizers in Mali as an example "TOGUNA SA", operations department, finance area and sales department can be considered as line departments. They are crucial to the existence of the organization.

By contrast, staff departments exist to support the activities of line departments. They must advise, counsel and assist line departments.

HR therefore is a staff function. They must help other departments to achieve the goals and objectives of the companies, departments and areas within the companies. To perform these tasks, they must understand the nature and operations of the organization and the challenges and goals of the managers and leaders. Possible solution for our sub-Saharan companies how to become transformational is to become more proactive. HR departments must determine who they have on board, evaluate their skills and abilities. To determine their employees with HR's abilities for the long-term strategic planning they can develop plans for proactive strategies on the base of gap analysis. Several activities are recommended:

- innovative, proactive and talent attracting plans,
- principles of avoiding nepotism and corruption in the hiring processes,
- full respect of job legislation,
- in-depth leadership development,

- successive planning, connected to
- performance management and change management initiatives,
- comprehensive and competitive compensation and benefits program,
- develop analytic and holistic thinking (both are needed to face the different problems which may occur in a company)
- to be credible too.

To consolidate all these conditions our companies must also think about the improving the structure of their HR departments. It should become simple, lean, transparent, strategically oriented.

3. Conclusions

The transformational HR department is the one that should be recognized as being important and valuable contributor to the company's future and help the organization to perform activities that will develop their structures. HR departments must be fully involved in the strategic decisions and become proactive and transformational which will increase their competitiveness. African companies may use these assets to become more competitive and move into the global market.

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