



HR YOUNG GUNS

HR FROM THE CLASSROOM

Every month, *HRM* speaks to a young university talent hoping to carve out a career in HR upon graduation

What attracted you to HR? Why are you studying it?

My personal interest lies in understanding how people function, and why people behave the ways that they do. My school experience has allowed me to work with a multitude of people from different cultures. This, in turn, has given me the opportunity to learn from them, and appreciate different viewpoints apart from my own. HR is a fitting area of work as the crux of it deals with managing the interests of individuals, which demands that a person in HR be able to look at things from different perspectives. I feel that going into this field will be of most relevance to my interest.

What aspect of HR do you hope to specialise in upon graduation?

Training and development is one domain which I find I can apply what I have learnt from both my majors: psychology and HR. More importantly, it is aligned with some of my interests. Boring as it sounds, I actually enjoy doing research as I feel that I get to learn new and interesting information. This aspect of HR allows me to evaluate existing training programmes and develop content for them.

I find it rewarding that people can gain useful knowledge and skills relevant for their job through training programmes that I have played a part in designing.

The top three things you want from your HR career?

I wish to be involved in HR project teams so that I get to come up with creative solutions for training

programmes. Also, continuous learning is something I wish to have in my career so that I can stay relevant and updated when I develop and design programmes. Lastly, I hope to immerse myself in other aspects of HR so that I get to broaden my perspectives and gain more insights.

What challenges do you anticipate?

I think that it might be difficult to motivate individuals at the workplace, as employees may not always see the importance behind training and the need to stay relevant. In other words, there may be inertia for change at the workplace. As a HR professional, I feel it is crucial to look into the needs of the employees and provide training opportunities for them. Also, every workplace has its own unique organisational culture and a key challenge for HR professionals is to adapt what has been learnt in theory and apply it well in the industry that they work in.

Your HR career five years from now?

I hope to specialise in HR consulting in the future. To take on this role well, I have to gain a lot of exposure and experience in other HR areas. It is crucial that I get a good understanding of the business that my clients deal with so that I can help to maximise the organisation's performance and potential in the long run.

I feel that an HR consultant will be an exciting and fulfilling role as I will get to have the opportunity to tackle problems and come up with well-researched and supported solutions.



Amanda Tan Jia Qi

Third-year social sciences student,
First Major in Psychology,
Second Major in Organizational
Behavior and Human Resources,
School of Social Sciences,
Singapore Management University

It is therefore crucial that I do my job well in a multitude of HR areas.

Hobbies and inspiration?

As someone with an outgoing personality, I like to unwind during the weekends with family and friends, by exercising or having a gathering over meals. Also, I like to join marathons for the fun of them, as I think that it is an interesting bonding activity with my family.

The benefits of multicultural HR teams

By Amanda Tan Jia Qi

According to a *Forbes Insights* report, diversity and inclusion are key areas companies are paying attention to. It is believed that a diverse workforce provides greater insights into business issues.

With the onset of globalisation, the workplace is more than often made up of employees of different nationalities who simultaneously bring varied cultural values and ideas.

Cooperative and well-managed multicultural teams are associated with lower levels of “groupthink” and increased sharing of diverse opinions. In addition, psychological research on culture has found that when multicultural teams sort out differences in their ideas, it can lead to greater creativity and innovation – ideals that are so crucial to businesses today.

Because HR professionals play such a strategic role in managing a multicultural workforce, if handled well, a company with such differing employees can reap many benefits.

Bridging cultural gaps

By employing a multicultural HR team, HR professionals can learn to be more culturally exposed and sensitive. Being more culturally aware, HR professionals can act as middle-men in dealing with cultural diversity in the workplace. Due to cultural differences in working styles and values, multicultural employees may have a tendency to divide and socialise separately. This division can cause a buildup in tension at work, and jeopardise company goals.

By exposing and training HR teams to appreciate and sort out cultural differences at work, HR professionals can learn how to bridge divisions between employees.

The HR department plays a core role in implementing infrastructure initiatives to improve employee communication in organisations. Gaining experience in dealing with multicultural colleagues can drive the HR team to come up with better support systems aimed at normalising cultural differences at the workplace.

Creativity and HR functions

A multicultural HR team is likely to be more creative in generating beneficial ideas for the organisation in the long run. An effective multicultural HR team allows for idea expansion through cultural perspective-taking.

According to researchers, cultural perspective taking requires that individuals actively take others' ideas into consideration, thereby creating room for idea elaboration and integration. This strategy allows HR departments to be more innovative and creative. More importantly, it allows such companies to gain a competitive edge over their rivals, as they are able to integrate, manage, and provide well for their employees.

Creativity and innovation are crucial to the success of the HR department's reward and motivation initiatives. Such strategies have been known to improve employee welfare and satisfaction at work. Creativity is also crucial to the HR department as it aims to craft strategies to attract,

retain and motivate talents, as well as for other HR functions.

Potential tensions in a multicultural team

Multicultural teams work best when members are willing to communicate openly about their differences and work together to bridge their cultural gaps. However, miscommunication and differences in working styles can cause tension between employees. This conflict is especially prevalent in teams consisting of members from individualistic and collectivistic cultures. Employees from individualistic cultures may prefer direct confrontation when conflict arises. On the other hand, employees from collectivistic cultures prefer indirect confrontation. Such disagreements in decision-making can cause unnecessary delays and disruption to project plans. Consequently, work does not get completed effectively or efficiently. Hence, when tensions in the HR department occur, it can spell a huge problem for the organisation.

Being aware of these potential problems can allow HR professionals to be better prepared. Moreover, it can allow companies to come up with preventive strategies and infrastructure to guard against such issues.

In summary, the HR department is crucial to managing multicultural teams and more importantly, can influence other company managers to implement culturally sensitive practices in order to create a more conducive environment for creativity-building, efficient and effective work.