



## 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?

To be honest, my interest in HR was sparked by sheer chance. During my second-year National Service (NS) stint, I was posted to a HR department. My boss exposed me to various HR functions that gave me a good grasp of the profession even before I entered university.

I was a tad bit unwilling to bid my HR days goodbye after my NS, and this unwillingness led me to apply for more HR internships that affirmed my passion for it. In hindsight, pursuing HR made perfect sense; I have always loved interacting with people and growing teams that I have led in my communities.

Some have told me that you do not really need a degree to practice HR. However, I believe that formal education in HR does provide a sound foundation for real-world application.

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

As of now, I am particularly interested in the compensation and benefits (C&B) function. With the C&B function moving from a role that is more operational to one that is strategic in nature, the value that it can bring towards the organisation and its workforce is endless. With proper implementation, a robust total rewards strategy that caters to the diverse needs of employees can help deliver superior performance and drive the business forward.

In addition, I find the challenge of developing and implementing an effective total rewards strategy that meets an organisation's need, while

not neglecting the human aspect of the work force, extremely rewarding.

### The top three things you want from your HR career?

Apart from making a difference in the organisation, I would like to be the leader that champions for positive change towards better and more measurable business results. I would also like to share more of my experiences to aspiring HR practitioners through mentorships.

### What challenges do you anticipate?

One challenge I foresee the HR industry facing is the effective use of analytics in crafting solutions for the workforce. The rise of big data and advanced data collection techniques has tremendous potential in helping organisations identify pain areas where they should focus more of their resources on.

Another challenge I foresee would be the engagement of the new generation of workers. As the demographics of our workforce shifts towards one which consists of a sizable proportion of the Generation Y population, it will be important for companies to understand the needs and wants of this younger generation. This is essential when it comes to developing strategies to engage the workforce to bring out the best in them.

### Your HR career five years from now?

I hope to lead change in an organisation. I would also love the chance to manage and mentor a team of my own, as this would enable me to learn more about the changing workforce demographics



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from the younger people in the team and by extension, the organisation.

### Hobbies and inspirations?

I absolutely love cooking for my family and friends! Few things in the world beat the sense of achievement I feel when I see them enjoying the food I cook. I secretly hope to be a restaurateur in the future.

Apart from cooking up food storms, I love music and have been playing the trumpet for over 10 years now.

# Using Total Rewards as a driver of engagement and performance

By Ong Chuon Yan

**W**ith the Compensation and Benefits (C&B) function becoming more strategic in nature, the idea of a total rewards strategy has been more widely used in order to cater to the differing needs of the workforce.

Moving away from the traditional compensation structure that emphasises monetary rewards to motivate employees, companies can now look at more interesting ways to drive employee performance. These could include providing employees with a more conducive environment that encourages healthy living, or promoting a culture of recognition at work. Besides this, having ample career development opportunities is especially relevant when it comes to the younger generation of today.

With today's workforce consisting of many generations, the proper implementation of a robust total rewards strategy has the potential to bring out the best from each different group of employees, increasing their productivity and driving performance in the process.

However, as with any new initiative, for it to be successful, proper planning and implementation will be essential. Here are two key challenges that companies should address in order to implement a successful total rewards strategy:

## Identifying the gaps of the current strategy

In order to implement an effective total rewards strategy, the organisation must first analyse its current reward strategy. It should aim to understand

the gaps that need to be bridged by listening to the voice of its employees. To do this, the company could conduct general surveys or focus group discussions that encourage employees to voice out their concerns. This will give the company a better idea of the gaps that need to be addressed in the new rewards strategy.

The use of the total rewards strategy could be the basis of a company's competitive advantage in attracting and retaining the best talent available. To better understand where its strategy is placed amongst its competitors, companies could also benchmark themselves against other companies. This would help them to understand what needs to be done in order to provide for their employees a best-in-class experience.

## The importance of effective communication

When it comes to communication, organisations must take a two-pronged approach: not only do they need to clearly state any new developments in the rewards system, they must also provide avenues for employees to better grasp the technicalities.

New initiatives, such as those aimed towards healthy living or employee development, should also be communicated well to employees. Companies can leverage on specialised employee networks to help promote and drive participation. These are instrumental steps to take to ensure that the system will be fully utilised by employees. Simply put, if employees are not able to comprehend or see the

value in the system, it is likely that they will not utilise it as much as the company would like them to.

To illustrate this, the flexible benefits system is one in which employees might find complicated to understand. In this sense, it will be important for the company to simplify the required processes for the employees in order for them to utilise the different benefits that are available. This could be done by producing flowcharts that clearly and simply describe the various processes for claims, reimbursements, and the like. They should also be periodically reminded about the ways that they are able to utilise their flexible credits before they expire.

## Conclusion: Total rewards as an engagement driver

To sum it all up, companies that are able to effectively implement a total rewards strategy that meets the different needs of its workforce will be able to leverage on it as a driver of employee engagement and retention.

This can be done by constantly listening to the voice of the employees and ensuring that the rewards strategy is well aligned with the external market. Internally, it will be important to communicate effectively with employees on the different initiatives and systems that are in place, in order to provide them with a holistic experience.

With a well-implemented total rewards strategy, companies will be able to inspire a higher level of engagement with improved business performance.