

Human Resources Best Practice Guidelines

SCONUL seeks to promote the development, implementation and sharing of good practice to improve service delivery to users. It supports members in planning for future service needs by identifying trends and issues for information services such as personalisation, collaboration, space, management and skills.

Any organisation's success will depend largely on whether its employees perform well. It is recognised that library and information services exist, in the main, as part of a larger organisation that will have its own human resource management policies and practices. SCONUL members have responsibility to work with human resource practitioners to understand and shape policies and practices, and adapt specific human resource management interventions to suit the organisational culture and readiness of their library and information service.

According to the 'Investors in People' Standard (<http://www.investorsinpeople.co.uk>), which is used by some libraries in the UK, people need the right knowledge, skills and motivation to work efficiently. There are other quality frameworks that also stress the importance of good people management.

Best practice in human resources management would demonstrate links to the total business planning and review cycle, and not just focus on human resource issues.

There are many ways to describe the culture, policies and processes that need to be in place and actively implemented to achieve best practice in human resource management. For example, the 'Investors in People' Standard lists ten areas:

Strategies to improve the performance of the organisation

1. Business Strategy
2. Learning and development strategy
3. People management strategy
4. Leadership and management strategy

Action to improve the performance of an organisation

5. Management effectiveness
6. Recognition and reward
7. Involvement and empowerment
8. Learning and development

Evaluation of the impact on the performance of the organisation

9. Performance measurement
10. Continuous improvement

Others have described areas for attention that are more specific to human resource management, without explicitly linking the overarching business strategies to the human resource management dimension. In these cases, the following broad headings, with examples of areas for attention, could apply:

Recruitment practices that result in the selection of excellent staff

- Accurate advertisements, job/role descriptions and person specifications and context information
- Appropriate selection tools and mechanisms
- Timely hiring
- Well planned induction

Viable and attractive benefits and compensation packages

- Equitability of treatment/Relativities between individuals and work groups
- Appropriate for the market

Employee performance management

- Individual staff objectives linked to business plans
- Regular feedback as well as formal appraisal
- Up-to-date job descriptions/roles
- Staff development and training that meets workplace requirements and individual needs; based on competencies required and developmental needs
- Skills audit/inventory

Workforce continuity and Succession planning

- Monitoring of absence and resignation data
- Monitoring age profiles
- Appropriate maternity and paternity leave provisions
- Identification of single person/critical dependencies
- Knowledge sharing systems
 - Mentoring
 - Shadowing
 - Job rotation
 - Job exchanges
 - Documentation/expert systems
- Exit interviews and management of knowledge handover

Conformance with legal obligations

- Discrimination
- Diversity
- Privacy
- Health and Safety
- Freedom of Information
- Equal Opportunity

Positive workplace culture

- Value defined and driven
- Change orientated, flexible culture
- Effective communication
- Plans, policies, guidelines available to all staff
- Positive encouragement/support for Innovation and continuous quality improvement
- Recognition and reward systems
- Engagement with work groups and union representatives
- Management of major change procedures
- Monitoring staff satisfaction

Implementation

SCONUL members should strive to demonstrate good practice in all these areas of human resources management. Members may be able to seek general advice (brokered confidentially by the Secretary) from other SCONUL members who have experience and expertise in human resources management,

Drafted by SCONUL HR T&FG
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