

Impact of COVID-19 on human resource management

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Short communication

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Abstract

The current situation regarding necessary intervention to avoid spreading the COVID-19 virus significantly affect numerous of areas of working life. It is possible to see significant movement towards home offices and distant work of teams. It is not possible to perceive current change only negatively. Research by Beno (2018) shows that home office has a positive influence on the personal work experience. But there are other impacts that we can see and will affect organizations in the future. The situation, when some kind of new virus or new wave of infection arises is likely to happen again. Organizations should be ready to respond quickly and have their action plans prepared. According to Yildirim and Korkmaz (2017), effectiveness of human resources management and team development is the determinant of project success. To be able to efficiently manage and to adapt appropriate approaches of employees, managers need to understand also employees' perspective.

Key words: COVID-19, Human Resources, Management, New perspectives.

El impacto de COVID-19 en el área de recursos humanos

Resumen

La situación actual con respecto a la intervención necesaria para evitar la expansión del virus COVID-19 afecta significativamente a numerosas áreas de la vida laboral. Es posible ver un movimiento significativo hacia los trabajos en casa y los trabajos a distancia de los equipos. No es posible percibir estos cambios actuales solo negativamente. La investigación de Beno (2018) muestra que el trabajo en casa tiene una influencia positiva en la experiencia laboral personal. Sin embargo, hay otros impactos que podemos observar y que afectarán a las organizaciones en el futuro. La situación, cuando surge algún tipo de virus nuevo o una nueva ola de infección, es probable que vuelva a ocurrir. Las organizaciones deben estar listas para responder rápidamente y tener planes de acción preparados. Según Yildirim y Korkmaz (2017), la efectividad de la gestión de recursos humanos y el desarrollo del equipo es el determinante del éxito del proyecto. Para poder gestionar de manera eficiente y adaptar los enfoques apropiados de los empleados, los gerentes deben comprender también la perspectiva de los empleados.

Palabras claves: COVID-19, Capital humano, Gestión, Nuevas perspectivas.

1 Development

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To have an overview of areas, that are impacted by the current (or future) situation caused by the restrictions related to health protection of employees during the COVID-19 pandemic, below is a list of changes in HR practices which need to be considered:

- *Different work conditions* – home offices and new conditions for task setting and controlling, distant work, separation of employees, necessity to wear protective equipment (masks, gloves, protective suites etc. and its delivery), division of teams into micro teams, possible lost of connections and relationships between colleagues, possible loss of work habits and behavior, inequalities between employees on home office and on those who have to work on place. In these new work environments, it is necessary to emphasize its aspects, such as social separation, necessity to communicate via technologies etc. in order to support health-promoting and satisfying workplaces (Robelski et al., 2019).
- *Distance management and new competencies of managers (especially line and middle management)* – motivation, coaching and mentoring, problem and conflict solving, supporting employee performance, process management and employee development, risk management, controlling of working hours. Research revealed that distance or online education and training of managers leads to their efficiency to work online and manage or treat others via video conferencing (Gordon, 2020). Moreover, digital tools are currently used to understand the performance characteristics and are considered as useful (Blatch-Jones et al., 2020).
- *Crisis management* – top management has to create a crisis team, plan, work and reflect and adjust plan and actions to current situation on daily, sometimes hourly basis.
- *Different work of teams and use of modern technologies* – communication and cooperation in distance, sharing of information through technologies, periodical online meetings, demands for new information systems or software, demands for adequate hardware for all team members. Research results showed significant effectiveness of training as a method not only of technological knowledge extension, but also a significant impact on actual behaviors of employees (Stefaniuk, 2020).
- *New ways of HR practices* – distant (online or telephone) recruitment, adaptation, evaluation, retention. Currently, organizations are increasingly exploring the use of digital tools to identify, recruit and retain employees (Blatch-Jones et al., 2020). The most widely used digital tool for recruitment is database-screening, which is being considered effective and reaching recruitment target. Fewer digital

retention tools are usually used, usually short message service (SMS) or email reminders (Blatch-Jones et al., 2020).

- *Training and education of employees using technologies or micro teams or 1:1* – According to Gordon (2020), experts perceive teaching, supervising and treating over videoconferencing only “slightly less effective” than local work. The highest significantly rated indication for online training is the possibility to use it in any conditions remotely.
- *Different approach towards generations* – each generation reacts differently on changes, prefers different conditions, have different level of using technologies or computer literacy and have different level of willingness to work under new conditions (Yildirim and Korkmaz, 2017).
- *Information and data security* – use of technologies for sensitive information sharing brings higher demand on security of information systems and software used by organizations and employees. The greatest gap in security involves the lack of employee awareness. Organizations should develop and implement an adequate training program focusing on the level of employee awareness in terms of information security. In this case, it should rather be a cyclical training program (Stefaniuk, 2020).
- *Lowering of salaries and wages, necessity for requalification, risk of job loss* – lower or no possibility to work in some areas for certain period of time due to closures, lack of supply, necessity to restructure work and work tasks or job descriptions, etc.
- *Communication and building relationships, employer branding* – continuous updating on new information, appeal for fulfilment of health and safety rules and conditions, changes in work hours or environment, information (online) meetings, mailings, visuals etc. are crucial for overall good overview and security of employees. For example, research by Liu et al. (2020) revealed a relationship between working hours, psychological distance, and the occupational mental health of employees. The results showed that the employee-organizational psychological distance may positively moderate inverted U-shaped relationship, and a “close” employee-organizational psychological distance may alleviate the pressure of work hours and help to maintain high-quality occupational mental health. So far, results of related studies showed moderate to low psychosocial demands regarding quantitative workloads (Robelski et al., 2019).
- *Safety and security, health protection* – disinfection and health rules, rules for common spaces, number of employees working together.
- *Employee fluctuation and changes in structure of employees* – lack of workers, problem with foreign workers, fear from new workers by current employees as potential bearers of disease.
- *Psychological aspects* – fear, depressions, struggling from social contact, loss of security, high risk of job loss, uncertain conditions, worse health, loss in family or social group. Possibility of psychological consultation is highly appreciated. The most important variables are warmth, wisdom, empathy, and skillfulness and it does not matter if the treatment is personal or online (via video conference) (Gordon, 2020).

The list of areas that have to be adjusted is long and demanding. On the other hand, we may find positive effects of this new environment. Positives of online organizational life is, for example, fast growth of computer literacy, abilities to use online systems for work, loss of fear of technologies, sharing of information and their accessibility and storing. Using online digital tools are considered as beneficial in the following areas: security

and transparency; inclusivity and engagement; human interaction (Blatch-Jones et al., 2020). There is usually a high level of stakeholder acceptance of the use of digital tools. Also, possibility for online education and training during specific period of time leads to development of skills and potential of employees. Online development contains the opportunity to connect experts from different fields or nations. Managers have an opportunity to learn and practice new ways of leadership and management. Home office is no longer one of the benefits in organizations, but a new way of work, which brings more flexibility and new opportunities. According to research by Beno (2018), telework or telecommuting practice has become an increasingly important employment tool, fulfilling key business needs while helping employees balance their work and personal commitments.

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