

Book Review

Carol T Kulik and Elissa L Perry (2024) *Human resources for the non-HR manager*, 2nd edition. Routledge, New York

This book is an excellent practical resource for professionals in human resource management (HRM). But more importantly, Kulik and Perry fill a gaping lacuna between theory and practice and provide a superb guide for anyone who is reflective about their supervisory or management skills or those who aspire to be managers and need a resource as a guide. This book is permeated with abundant practical help with the topics covered, plus a vignette of thought-provoking bite-sized case studies for readers to mull over and think through. Such case studies are cleverly infused within the the book and would be useful to academics to encourage discussion among business management students and those studying HRM. The case studies are written with the issues that arise in workplaces and would be appreciated by experienced and new managers in small, medium, or large enterprises as each chapter presents well-considered and articulated observations. Bonuses, which the authors refer to as ‘Knots’, appear in each chapter. The Knots outline succinct scenarios that challenge the reader to consider how they would deal with situations; answers are provided. Additional bonuses appear throughout the book in the form of pointers to further readings and notes that list appropriate references and sources for inquiring readers to pursue. This book avoids unnecessary complexity often associated with academic writers as it is written in easy-to-read plain English.

Observations on the content of each chapter

Chapter 1: The non-HR manager

This chapter lures the reader as it contains practical advice for the non-HR manager with innovative approaches, ‘Knots’ and case studies that are innovative and humorous. The quiz that appears in this chapter is cleverly developed and the guidance is as strong as it is practical. When reading this chapter a thought that came to mind was that if every chapter was of this standard (and they are) all managers or graduating students should read this book as part of their performance management.

Chapter 2: Recruiting employees

This chapter covers recruitment by listing various methods and itemises processes and procedures. Some recruiters adopted innovative and amusing practices but overall the advertising and other issues pertinent to recruitment are covered with insight, wise observations, and definitions. Recruitment can be a dry topic but this chapter is not, and will prove to be very engaging and useful to readers.

Chapter 3: Hiring new employees

This chapter emphasises adherence to the law and progresses through valid procedures that may be adopted. Assessing résumés, scrutinising application forms, and conducting behavioural or personality tests are all covered. Shortlisting, cognitive skills, and integrity testing also feature in this chapter and more. Again it is easy to read, practical, and engaging.

Chapter 4: Interviewing job applicants

Reading this chapter made it apparent that this book is designed to ensure that the manager and those managed experience an environment that minimises mistakes as humans interact in workplaces with other humans. As each chapter unfolds, it becomes more obvious. This chapter provides excellent examples, and the practices – such as what to do and what not to do – are conveyed cleverly. Avoiding questions about age, family, and other personal factors that are to be averted is outlined with excellent recommendations that ensure people can cope with the demands of the position, such as travel and overtime, resulting in the increased likelihood of appropriate people being appointed. Behavioural and structural questions embedded in the interview process are a key feature of this chapter. Interview problems are outlined but balanced with advice on conducting quality interviews. This chapter has many other factors that are recommended to all managers and those aiming to become a manager. This chapter's more obscure residual benefit is that it provides useful information to potential job applicants.

Chapter 5: Onboarding new employees

This chapter provides an excellent array of resources for onboarding staff. The provision of information and 'who is who' in the organisation with introductions is covered well. So too is information and guidance on training programs, orientation programs, technological support systems, and the appointment of mentors. The chapter also covers remote onboarding, a major feature in the COVID era but is common in global recruitment practices. The role of the manager is clearly outlined, along with recommendations to meet early and often. Again, the managers' Knots are recommended reading, and there is a description of what onboarding is not that is written with a clear purpose.

Chapter 6: Training and developing employees

This chapter contains some pragmatic outlines of terms associated with effective training. For good reasons, it guides readers through key issues such as *Training Content, Instructional Principles and Methods* – to avoid 'costly errors, injuries and legal claims' (p. 139) and boost productivity and financial performance. Training needs analysis is covered, motivation, interpersonal (soft) skills development, and communication are comprehensive despite being brief. This chapter contains important post-training issues, such as support, opportunities to practice, performance feedback, and training evaluation. It provides an overall guide unlike 'Management for Dummies' but more akin to '*Management for Smart Practical Operators*' aiming to plan and encourage success for all in the

workplace. The trend continues in this chapter as it presents excellent thinking in its management ‘Knots’ and has some thought-provoking tables to add logical steps to planning.

Chapter 7: Managing employee performance

Performance management is always an area of conjecture and considerable debate and may induce tension in the workplace. This chapter will prove useful to managers who read it thoroughly and apply the guidance it recommends in this very difficult area of staff management. The coverage of feedback, evaluating performance, rating accuracy, self-appraisal, and comparative methods are well stated among many other key sections. The underpinning message that needs to be more explicit is the need for managers to be organised and document the positive and not-so-positive work that their staff perform, and demonstrate to the staff member being appraised that thoughts and observations have been carefully recorded and recalled, which has the potential for mutual respect. The notion of organisation is certainly within the chapter but needs firmer elaboration.

Chapter 8: Rewarding employees

The range of market indicators and comparative issues related to similar jobs in the organisation and, more broadly, the industry at large, are outlined skilfully and succinctly. Job evaluation, bonuses, and rewards are covered with clear and well-stated definitions. Non-monetary rewards are also a feature of this chapter, drawing on profit-sharing stock options and more. Overall this important chapter has an array of reward models that prove useful to readers. A more obscure reward for many researchers is that employees seek a safe workplace characterised by dignity and respect for their work, ideas and skills. It would be useful in the next edition to further emphasise this issue, reflecting the excellent additions made in this second book. This chapter is easy to read and will induce a higher appreciation of the concept of rewards in the workplace.

Chapter 9: Disciplining employees and ending their employment

This is always a tough area to cover, and managers need a chapter of this type that provides valuable guidance and strategies. The chapter advises managers to invoke disciplinary discussion as early as necessary because postponement may lead to an expansion of a problem. Deciding when to discipline can be a tricky situation in terms of timing and the reasons why. This chapter steps through the thought processes required to benefit managers facing staff that are proving to be problematic. This chapter emphasised the importance of the managers’ behaviour being appropriate and, most importantly, being mindful of employment laws in the relevant jurisdiction.

Chapter 10: Retaining employees

The insight presented in this chapter will strike a chord with most readers who are experienced employees. The cost of recruitment and training are well covered in other sections in the book but why employees leave and how to avoid turnover is well stated in this excellent chapter. Anticipating warning signs and the impact of organisational shocks are

outlined briefly but effectively. Where staff leave to pursue their long-term vocational goals and such a move is likely to prove successful requires a manager to be professional and imbued with grace and an even temperament, as stated using different terms within this chapter. There are many useful observations in how major companies deal with staff leaving the organisation. Exit interviews are expanded upon, accompanied by a handy table that provides excellent guidance. There are managers' checkpoints, reasons why employees stay, plus many other aspects of comprehensive relevance to staff retention. Once again, this is a chapter all managers can learn from.

Chapter 11: Creating an inclusive workplace

Diversity and inclusion (D&I) is paid considerable respect in the concluding chapter. In this edition, enhanced emphasis is placed on this crucial topic to all enterprises and managers that set the tone and environment within workplaces. The definition and importance D&I is well stated, emphasising the creation of inclusive climates and the need for formal policies and practices. Once again, there are excellent examples of D&I policies and practices in numerous corporations well known to readers. Similarly, flexible work arrangements are outlined with interesting examples. Organisations were D&I internal policies on a formal and informal basis with each approach adding to the productivity to such organisations in their own ways. The authors are clever by outlining informal inclusion initiatives and programs that are often formal but can develop into a more casual discussion to assist staff members' 'belonging'. The benefits of recruiting people who may think differently to the recruiter or who may not emanate from a similar ethnic background are embedded as a strong message. In this and other chapters, it may be useful for the authors to dwell on gender equity with enhanced emphasis. This is not a criticism of the book. Simply stated, given the quality of this book overall, a greater focus on gender equity due to the insights of these capable academic authors would be a bonus, perhaps in edition 3.

Summary

This book is an excellent resource for any manager or those with managerial aspirations. It contains stimulating insights that will extend the thinking and planning for the wise people who read it comprehensively and use the definitions and tips to be better managers.

This book has jumped the academic and theoretical fence into the practicalities of workplaces as it provides an excellent resource that management and supervisory practitioners would be well advised to heed as the 'how to manage' concepts skilfully outlined in an easy-to-read and interesting, engaging style. Each page is informative and conjures rich practical circumstances.

There are three other points I wish to make. Firstly, in a working career that extended for half a century, I would have relished the opportunity to give this book to the underperformers, and there were many. For the excellent managers I experienced in five phases of a

long career in differing occupations, I can identify the characteristics and approaches many adopted that align with this book. They would have been better if the good managers were armed with this book as a guide. It would have been useful to me as well. Secondly, despite this book being aimed at the non-HR manager, if I were still designing HRM courses or commerce courses in management and leadership, I would recommend extensive use of this book. The minor case studies alone are invaluable to stimulate discussion at undergraduate or postgraduate levels. Thirdly, when reading this book, I imagined each chapter representing individual instruments in an orchestra. When the orchestra blends the sound from each device, a wonderful experience results. If a manager reflected on the tips and guidance from each chapter, the workplace might be as pleasant as a talented orchestra's music.

I congratulate the authors for this excellent contribution to management.

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