

An Exploration of Strategic Human Resource

Management in RTÉ:

*Does Human Resources Deliver a Strategic
Contribution?*

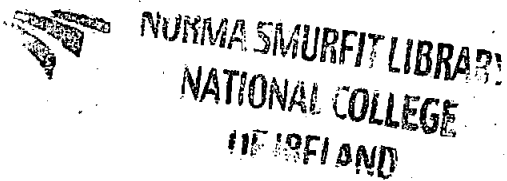
Niamh A. Killeen

BA (Honours) Human Resource Management

BAHHRF NCI

July 2009

DECLARATION



I hereby certify that this material, which I now submit for assessment is entirely my own work and has not been submitted in whole or in part for assessment for any academic purpose other than in fulfilment for that stated above.

Signed Niamh Killeen Date 20/7/09

(Niamh A. Killeen)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

During the last year and particularly in the last few months in which I completed this thesis, many people gave me a great deal of support and guidance. I would like to take this opportunity to sincerely thank the following: -

- Professor Serge Basini, my academic supervisor for his help, guidance, support and excellent words of wisdom;
- Christy Killeen, who was always there for advice and support;
- My colleagues, for all their support and guidance throughout my studies;
- My Parents and my family for all the support, patience and understanding over the last few months;
- Walter Hunt, for all his understanding, unfailing patience, technological expertise and support.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES.....	vii
LIST OF TABLES	viii
ABBREVIATIONS.....	ix
CHAPTER 1. SETTING THE SCENE.....	1
1.1. Introduction.....	1
1.2. Development of Strategic Human Resource Management.....	1
1.3. Thesis Motivation.....	1
1.4. Research Question.....	2
1.5. Thesis Objectives	2
1.6. Methodology.....	2
1.7. Outline Structure.....	2
1.8. Conclusion.....	3
CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW.....	4
2.1. Introduction.....	4
2.2. Evolution of SHRM.....	4
2.3. Strategic Management.....	8
2.4. How SHRM Can Create Competitive Advantage.....	10
2.5. How SHRM Can Add Value to an Organisation	15
2.6. A Seat at the Top Table.....	19
2.7. Blueprint for the Future – HR Value Proposition	21
2.8. Conclusion.....	22
CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY.....	24
3.1. Introduction.....	24
3.2. Research Philosophy	24

3.3.	Research Objectives and Methodologies.....	25
3.4.	Research Approach	26
3.5.	Research Strategy.....	26
3.6.	Research Method.....	27
3.7.	Analysis of Data.....	28
3.8.	Selecting a Relevant Research Topic.....	30
3.9.	Research Respondents.....	30
3.10.	Timescale	30
3.11.	Resources	31
3.12.	Limitations of the Research.....	31
3.13.	Ethical Issues.....	31
3.14.	Conclusion.....	32
CHAPTER 4. ANALYSIS OF RESULTS.....		33
4.1.	Introduction.....	33
4.2.	Research Subjects.....	33
4.3.	Exploring the Strategic Contribution of RTE's HR Unit.....	33
4.4.	The Structure and Role of the HR Unit.....	35
4.5.	Recognition of HR as a Source of Competitive Advantage.....	36
4.6.	HR Adds Value to the Organisation.....	38
4.7.	Seat at the top Table.....	40
4.8.	Conclusion.....	41
CHAPTER 5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION.....		42
5.1.	Introduction	42
5.2.	Discussion	42
5.3.	Research Question.....	44
5.4.	Research Objectives	45

5.5. Recommendations	46
5.6. Future Work	47
5.7. Conclusion.....	47
BIBLOGRAHY.....	49
APPENDIX 1	53
Company Overview – Radio Teilifis Éireann	
APPENDIX 2.....	57
Company Overview – Radio Teilifis Éireann	
APPENDIX 3	61
Interview Transcripts	
APPENDIX 4.....	112
Project Timescale	

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1 Layers of the Business Environment.....	8
Figure 2 Porter's Value Chain.....	9
Figure 3 Customer Satisfaction.....	13
Figure 4 Balanced Scorecard.....	15
Figure 5 Spencer's Cost versus Added Value.....	17
Figure 6 Spencer's Future Tasks.....	18
Figure 7 Added Value of HRM.....	18
Figure 8 The HR Value Proposition.....	21
Figure 9 Checkland's Action Research Cycle.....	26
Figure 10 Research Spiral.....	27
Figure 11 Qualitative Analysis as a Circular Process.....	29

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1 Traditional versus Emerging HRM.....	5
Table 2 Evolution of HR Roles.....	6
Table 3 Objectives and Methodology.....	25
Table 4 Data Analysis Template.....	29
Table 5 Data Analysis Themes.....	35
Table 6 Ulrich's HR Model.....	43
Table 7 Chapters, Objectives and Methodologies.....	45

ABBREVIATIONS

BA	Broadcasting Assistant
BCO	Broadcasting Coordinators
BPR	Business Process Re-Engineering
BSC	Balanced Scorecard
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CIPD	Chartered Institute of Personnel Development
DAB	Digital Audio Broadcasting
DG	Director General
DTT	Digital Terrestrial Television
EA	Employee Advocate
HC	Human Capital
HR	Human Resources
HRM	Human Resource Management
IBD	Independent Business Division
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IBEC	Irish Business and Employers Confederation
ICTU	Irish Congress of Trade Unions
IRT	Industrial Relations Tribunal
IT	Information Technology
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
MA	Managers Association
Marconi	RTÉ Intranet
NCI	National College of Ireland
PDS	Performance Development System
RTÉ	Radio Telefis Éireann
SHRM	Strategic Human Resource Management

CHAPTER 1. SETTING THE SCENE

"We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit." Aristotle

1.1. Introduction

This chapter introduces the motivation for the thesis. Following a review of current practices in the field of Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM) in private and public organisations, it was decided to investigate if it currently adds value in Radio Telefís Éireann (RTE) Human Resource (HR) function and does it deliver a strategic contribution in the future. The thesis motivation is outlined identifying the key drivers behind this research project. The research question is stated followed by the objectives and methodology, and finally the thesis structure is outlined.

1.2. Development of Strategic Human Resource Management

The current economic environment is driving organisations to react to business pressures. In these unprecedented times it is essential that all areas of the organisation deliver a strategic contribution. Set against this background, this dissertation proposes an exploration of SHRM in order to investigate if HR has delivered and can deliver a strategic contribution to the organisation.

1.3. Thesis Motivation

The motivation for this thesis stems from a literature review in the area of SHRM and exposure to front-line human resources within RTE. These have served to highlight the following areas of importance: -

1. The strategic importance of SHRM for organisations.
2. The need for a strategic approach to HRM to ensure it adds value to the organisation.
3. The difficulties in matching organisational strategy with SHRM.

Further reading of the literature following the submission of my original proposal opened new doors as the subject of the investigation had to become more focused. The review brought into question whether it was the HR Unit or human resources as a management philosophy that delivered the strategic contribution. Due to the scale of this investigation and the time available it was decided to limit the focus of the

investigation to RTÉ's HR Unit. An over view of RTÉ and its structure is outlined in Appendix 1.

1.4. Research Question

Exploration of SHRM:

Does RTÉ's HR Unit deliver a strategic contribution?

1.5. Thesis Objectives

The researcher has developed objectives, the goal of which is to understand how SHRM delivers a strategic contribution in RTÉ. The objectives are: -

1. Gain an understanding of SHRM and how it adds value to an organisation.
2. Identify if the RTÉ HR unit delivers a strategic contribution.
3. Build upon the knowledge gained in order to suggest enhancements to the future delivery of strategic contributions in RTÉ.

1.6. Methodology

A critical success factor in any research project is the development of a methodology capable of matching the needs of the research objectives. Each objective is fulfilled using a relevant methodology, outlined in Table 3 Objectives and Methodology. Analysis of issues is a core requirement within the research process and the product of analysis will be synthesised and evaluated. By identifying the underlying discourses it is intended to determine subtle variations in order to arrive at a number of conclusions.

1.7. Outline Structure

The remainder of this thesis structure is as follows: -

Chapter 2 consists of a literature review of the theory of strategic management and SHRM and how it can add value to the organisation. The chapter introduces the fundamentals of SHRM and its future direction. The chapter outlines SHRM's strategic contribution and how it can add value to the organisation.

Chapter 3 sets out my research philosophy by outlining my epistemological and ontological stance. The research objectives and methodologies to achieve these objectives are then outlined. As the chapter moves further into the Saunders et al.

(2007) “research onion” the chapter outlines my use of an inductive research approach and an action research strategy. Mixed methods using literature review, semi-structured interview and organisational document review was used to collect primary and secondary data. The analysis of the data consisted of a document review using template analysis to identify themes in the primary and secondary data. The chapter concludes with an overview of the research respondents, the time and resources required along with research limitations and ethical issues.

Chapter 4 reports on the analysis of the results. This includes quotes from the research respondents and document review which are coupled with quotations from the literature review. This is framed in the overall context of the research themes highlighted in Chapter 2. Using the data analysis template developed in chapter 3 the primary and secondary data is then analysed. The presentation of identified themes should demonstrate whether or not the RTÉ HR unit deliver a strategic contribution.

Chapter 5 presents a reflection on each of the findings and provides an answer to the research question. The purpose of the chapter is to demonstrate the extent to which the research question has been answered and how the research objectives have been achieved.

1.8. Conclusion

By undertaking this project it is hoped to develop knowledge in the area of SHRM for the researcher and in the HR field. To do this it is hoped to develop a research question, establish a number of research objectives, identify a number of research themes, identify a suitable methodology carry out the research and develop a number of findings and finally provide discussion, recommendations and conclusions.

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

"To improve is to change; to be perfect is to change often." Winston Churchill

2.1. Introduction

The objective of this chapter is to review the current academic literature in relation to HR and strategic management. The purpose of this literature review is to gain an understanding of SHRM and how it can add value to an organisation. As part of the review it is proposed to investigate the evolution of SHRM as it developed from personnel management to where it is today. A brief look at strategic management is then taken to set the context of SHRM before looking at how it can create competitive advantage and add value to an organisation. Finally the chapter looks at the HR value proposition as part of implementing HR transformation.

2.2. Evolution of SHRM

In order to make the distinction between HRM and SHRM, it is important to understand the evolution of the field of HRM (Butler, Ferris & Napier, 1991). SHRM has developed from HRM which in turn developed from Personnel Management. HRM consists of various practices used to manage people in organisations and these practices have commonly been grouped into sub-disciplines of selection, training, appraisal and rewards (Fombrun, Tichy & Devanna, 1994).

According to David Guest (1998) HRM should be concerned with ensuring commitment from employees; creating a focus on values, mission and purpose; developing an environment based on trust and building an organisation consisting of flexible roles, flatter structures and where there is autonomy and self-control within the work that individuals do.

2.2.1. Personnel versus HRM

The distinction between the traditional personnel role and that of HRM (Holbeche, 1999) is outlined in Table 1.

Characteristics of the traditional personnel role	Characteristics of the emerging role of HRM
Reactive	Proactive
Employee advocate	Business partner
Task force	Task and enablement focus
Focus on operational issues	Focus on strategic issues
Qualitative issues	Quantitative issues
Stability	Constant change
Tactical solutions	Strategic solutions
Functional integrity	Multi-functional
People as expense	People as assets

Table 1 Traditional versus Emerging HRM

2.2.2. Definition of SHRM

Walker (1992) defined strategic HRM as the means of aligning the management of human resources with the strategic content of the business.

“HR should not be defined by what it does but by what it delivers – results that enrich the organisation’s value to customers, investors and employees” (David Ulrich, 1998).

Wiley (2008) describes SHRM as the process of taking a long-term approach to Human Resource Management through the development and implementation of HR programmes that address and solve business problems and directly contribute to major long-term business objectives.

2.2.3. Human Resources Activities and Outcomes

McLeod, Schell in 2000 describe the primary HR activities as recruiting and hiring, education and training, data management, termination and administration. This analysis provides a clinical and traditional view of the HR function.

In research carried out by Armstrong & Long (1994) into what was contained in organisations’ HR strategies two levels were identified. Firstly the macro level covering vision and mission, organisation performance, quality and customer care,

commitment and the introduction of new technology. Secondly the micro level dealing with learning, training and development, reward, industrial relations.

Becker, Huselid & Ulrich (2001) highlight high-performance policies, processes and practices as the fundamental requirement to the influence HR professionals have on the organisation. Theory is necessary but not sufficient; HR must also be involved in the strategy implementation process as an active partner.

2.2.4. Roles of HR

Ulrich & Brockbank (2005, pp.201) went on to propose a framework based on a “synthesis” of HR roles. Table 2 outlines how this has evolved over the years of their research.

Mid-1990s	Mid-2000s	Evolution of Thinking
Employee Champion	Employee Advocate (EA) Human Capital Developer (HC)	Employees are increasingly critical to the success of organisations. EA focuses on today's employee; HC focuses on how employees prepare for the future.
Administrative Expert	Functional Expert	HR practices are central to HR value. Some HR practices are delivered through administrative efficiency (such as technology) and other through policies, menus and interventions, expanding the “functional expert” role.
Change Agent	Strategic Partner	Being a strategic partner has multiple dimensions: business expert, change agent, knowledge manager, and consultant. Being a change agent represents only part of the strategic partner role.
Strategic Partner	Strategic Partner	See Above
	HR Leader	The sum of the first four roles equals leadership, but being a HR leader also has implications for leading the HR function, collaborating with other functions, ensuring corporate governance and monitoring the HR community.

Table 2 Evolution of HR Roles

2.2.5: Roles of HR in Large Organisations

David Ulrich (2005, pp191,196) has proposed a more recent view outlining that HR professionals in large HR departments have five different roles and responsibilities.

These refer to transactional work, corporate HR, embedded HR, centres of expertise, and operational executors. Each of the five roles has unique contributions.

1. Transactional work includes standardised, routine work that is undertaken by service centres and outsourcing.
2. Corporate HR consists of corporate culture and identity development, implementing the CEO's agenda, aligning HR with business goals, solving disputes between centres of expertise and embedded HR, being responsible for employees at the corporate level, and making sure of the professional development of the HR staff.
3. Embedded HR professionals go by many titles: "relationship managers", "HR partners", "engagement managers", "HR generalists." They work directly with line managers and the business unit leadership team to clarify strategy, perform organisation audits, deliver supportive HR strategies, and lead their HR function.
4. Centres of expertise operate as consulting firms inside the organisation. These centres of expertise are asked for assistance when the organisation is about to enter into a contract about independent work from external vendors.
5. Operational executors are responsible for individual casework, operational tasks, analysis and reporting, delivering initiatives, implementing business initiatives, or implementing initiatives from the centres of expertise. They transform the business requirements driven by embedded HR professionals into an operational plan with innovative HR practices that are driven by centres of expertise. (Developed from Ulrich & Brockbank, 2005 pp191, 196).

2.2.6. Partnership

The importance of the HR function working in partnership with line managers have long been established (Ulrich, 1997). Employee involvement and partnership as part of driving competitiveness at the level of the enterprise has been endorsed by a number of bodies in Ireland including IBEC and ICTU. An agreed definition is:

"Partnership is an active relationship based on recognition of a common interest to secure the competitiveness, viability and prosperity of the enterprise. (National Agreement, 1996)

2.3. Strategic Management

Before looking at SHRM it is important to understand it in the context of overall strategic management. Strategy is a plan of action or policy designed to achieve a major or overall aim. Origin early 19th century: from French *stratégie*, from Greek *stratēgia* ‘generalship’, from *stratēgos*. (Developed from New Oxford Dictionary of English)

Strategy is the direction and scope of an organisation over the long term, which achieves advantage in a changing environment through its configuration of resources and competencies with the aim of fulfilling stakeholder expectations (Johnson et al 2008).

The environment in which organisations exist is their means of survival. “Satisfied customers are what keep an organisation in business” (Johnson et al., 2008). Business pressure on an organisation is a force for change and successful organisations must change with agility in reaction and in anticipation of that force. Business pressures come in the form of market, technological and societal pressures (Turban et al., 2007).

In today’s business environment organisations need to constantly evaluate their external and internal environment to understand the forces at work. Johnson et al., (2008) describes a framework for analysing changing and complex environments; this is outlined in Figure 1.

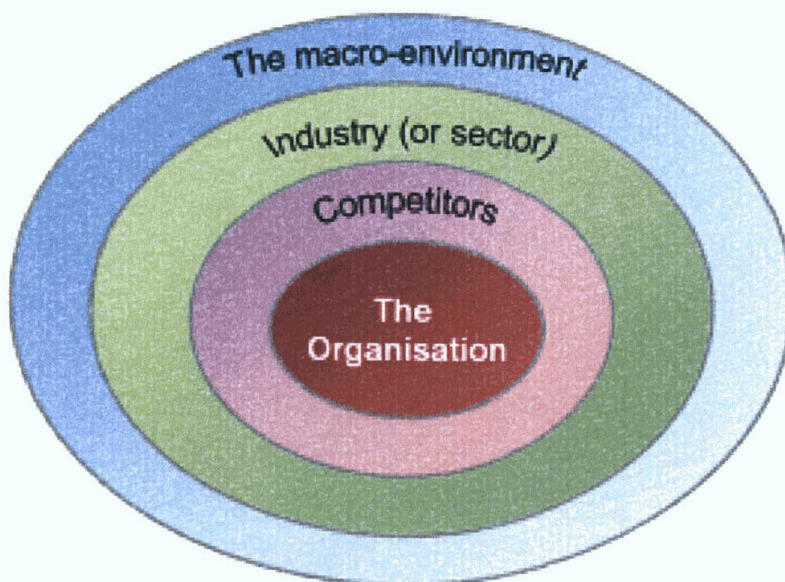


Figure 1 Layers of the Business Environment

Analysis of the macro-environment helps to identify how future trends and key drivers in the political, economic, social, technological, environmental and legal environments might impinge on organisations. Assessing the industry using a framework such as Porter's Five Forces identifies the competition within the industry. An understanding of the basis of competition can be gained by analysing the different strategic groups and customers as well as the different market segments. This helps develop recognition of what customer's value, the critical success factors, opportunities and threats between the various competitors. The final stage is the internal analysis of its strategic capabilities to gain an understanding of what sets it apart from other organisations and how to gain competitive advantage using core competencies (developed from Johnson et al., 2008).

2.3.1. The Value Chain

The Value Chain describes the activities in an organisation which create a product or service. The concept was developed in relation to competitive strategy by Michael Porter. Figure 2 is a representation of the value chain. Primary activities are directly concerned with the creation or delivery of a product or service, the operations that add value. Support activities help improve the effectiveness or efficiency of the primary activity (Johnson et al., 2008).

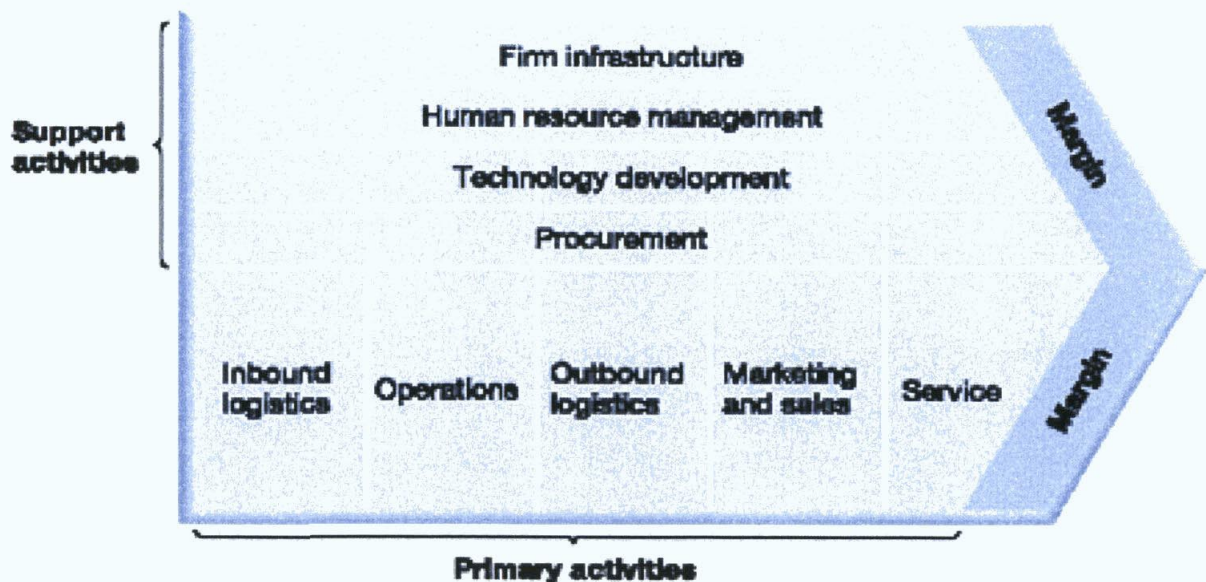


Figure 2 Porter's Value Chain

2.4. How SHRM Can Create Competitive Advantage

C.K. Prahalad (1990) when describing the roots of competitive advantage stated that the real sources of competitive advantage are to be found in management's ability to consolidate corporate-wide technologies and production skills into competencies that empower individual business to adapt quickly to changing opportunities.

Globalisation and the recognition of human capital as a key organisational resource have been the key drivers forcing organisations to become more lean and agile. Companies have realised that human resources could be leveraged to gain competitive advantage (Porter, 1980; Druker, 1992; Hamel & Prahalad, 1994). HR had the potential to influence strategic decision making as human capital managers and as a potential source of competitive advantage (Ulrich, 1997, Schuler/Jackson/Storey, 2001).

It is about exploiting the strategic capability of an organisation, in terms of its resources and competencies, to provide competitive advantage (Johnson et al., 2008). Johnson et al., goes on to describe four types of resources. Firstly physical resources such as machines and buildings, secondly financial resources such as capital and cash, thirdly human resources including the mix, skill and knowledge of employees and other people in an organisation's network. Finally intellectual capital is an intangible resource and includes patents, brands business systems and customer databases.

Johnson et al., (2008) describes the capabilities for competitive advantage as unique resources and core competencies. These distinctive and rare organisational capabilities are difficult for competitors to imitate. Unique resources are those resources that critically underpin competitive advantage and that the competition cannot easily obtain or imitate. Core competences are skills, work processes and abilities by which resources are utilised to achieve competitive advantage. Competitors cannot imitate or obtain these competencies.

According to Pfeffer (1994), as other sources of competitive success have become less important, what remains a crucial, differentiating factor is the organisation, its employees and how they work. He goes on to outline how strategic management researchers recognise that sustained competitive advantage arises more from a firm's internal resource skill set and its human capital that are difficult to imitate or obtain than from a firm's product market position.

The bottom line: core competencies are taken to mean those skills and abilities by which resources are deployed through an organisation's activities and processes such as to achieve competitive advantage in ways that others cannot imitate or obtain (Hamel & Prahalad, 1990).

Strategic planning seeks to identify those organisational decisions and actions which yield the greatest advantage under various assumptions about the organisation and its environment. The integration of the HR function into the organisational strategy enables it to support and implement the strategic plan to achieve a competitive advantage (Wofford, 2002). This strategy provides for the maximisation of human capital, reduction of wasted and inefficient labour and other financial investment, and eventually the maximisation of profitability.

For public service organisations, it is the basis on which the organisation chooses to achieve superior quality of services in competition with others for funding – how it provides “best value.” This can be done by achieving a “centre of excellence” status.

2.4.1. A Question of Rareness and Imitability

Organisations and HR professionals must understand internal sources of competitive advantage. Resources may be valuable but common (i.e. not rare) and of competitive parity (i.e. they are not advantageous). Although many other competing firms already possess these valuable resources and capabilities, an organisation can gain at least a temporary competitive advantage. This may be the process where employees have a tacit knowledge of what is difficult for competitors to imitate. Competing organisations face a cost disadvantage in imitating these resources and capabilities. Organisations with special abilities in this area can obtain a sustained competitive advantage over their rivals. Imitation is crucial and can occur in one of two ways: duplication (copy the same resource) or substitution (use a different resource). (Developed from Johnson et al., 2008).

2.4.2. HR Competencies and Skills

The management of competencies of the HR of the organisation is an urgent task with survival implications (Mohrman, Lawler p.437). Competencies refer to knowledge, skills or abilities of people. Ulrich (1997) says that professional competencies of HR professionals refer to knowing the business, being competent, anticipating change and

responding proactively, involving and committing line managers, being data-based, prioritising and ensuring simple successes, remaining close to the customer, and using HR practices to build competitive advantage.

Dynamic environments; strategies, designs, and technologies mean that the need for competencies and capabilities changes, with some becoming obsolete or irrelevant while the new organisation requires different and often a more advanced group of competencies and capabilities (Mohrman, Lawler p.437). Strategies for growing and maintaining a deep understanding of their own current and long-term strategic interests in the midst of a core workforce that grows and evolves with the company (Rousseau & Wade-Bernoni, 1995)

Yeung et al., (1994) HR competency model consists of four elements:

1. Business mastery – includes business acumen, customer orientation and external relations.
2. Personal credibility – refers to trust, personal relations, values and courage.
3. HR mastery – consists of staffing, performance appraisal, rewards system, communication and organisation design.
4. Change mastery – refers to interpersonal skills and influence, problem solving skills, innovativeness and creativity for change mastery.

2.4.3. Strategic HRM and Human Capital Management

SHRM contributes to the strategic business process by assessing the talent pool to determine if the appropriate expertise needed to accomplish the business strategies is available within the organisation and if not, by sourcing and acquiring them. Ulrich (2005) describes this as developing key organisational capabilities and that an organisation's capabilities are the deliverables of HR efforts. He goes on to outline how the organisations identity and reputation is represented by its capability and the competencies skills and know-how of its employees the organisations ability.

HR strategic planning is essential in supporting the organisation to achieve its goals. It must communicate clearly to staff, support policies which align and grow the skill and talent of its people and enable them to perform to their potential. In this way HR resources are aligned to corporate strategy. HR planning ensures that strategies and practices are consistent across the organisation and that gaps between present and future capabilities will be addressed.

Strategic planning seeks to identify those organisational decisions and actions which yield the greatest advantage under various assumptions about the organisation and its environment. The integration of HR function into the organisational strategy enables it to support and implement the strategic plan to achieve a competitive advantage (Wofford, 2002).

By addressing these issues at the strategic planning stage with HR included, there is the higher likelihood of more efficiently reaching the business outcomes and avoiding chaos by not having the right fit among employees, corporate strategies and business environments.

2.4.4. Defining Customer Value

The organisation must identify what are the capabilities that deliver what the customer sees as value. “The goal... is to focus on the right things; to target those activities that will make the biggest impact in terms of customer perceived value” (Hamel & Prahalad, 1994). Organisations must identify those areas where the ratios between value perceived by the customer and the cost of creating that value is as high as possible. It is the customer who defines value not the service provider.

Cascio (2005, pp.158,164) outlined a relationship chain linking effective management practice to employee satisfaction, customer satisfaction and long-term profitability and growth. The first three links in the chain result in profitability and growth (Figure 3).



Figure 3 Customer Satisfaction

2.4.5. Alignment of Strategy and Strategic Human Resources

HR's output should create fundamental value to the organisation. The concept of HR as a business partner leads to the inclusion of the HR leader in strategic business planning. “In the most fundamental sense, strategic business planning involves choosing how an organisation will compete” (Rothwell, 1994).

Kaplan & Norton (2001) highlight that it is an organisations employee's who actually execute strategy and the most successful companies engage the employees in that

process. This allows employees a view of the company's vision and strategic direction therefore helping align human resources with organisational strategy.

A study conducted by Becker, Huselid & Ulrich (2001) indicates that less than 10% of the 98 firms that participated had formal measurement systems in the HRM area therefore making it difficult to measure if HR was aligned with the organisations strategic direction.

2.4.6. Corporate Performance Measurement (CPM)

"What gets measured gets done." (Kaplan & Norton, 1996)

This is a management tool for monitoring the implementation of the strategic plan and assessing the achievement of strategic objectives. The model supports enhanced decision making, performance monitoring and accountability.

A balanced scorecard (BSC) (Kaplan & Norton, 1996) type model would provide an improved picture of the critical dynamics. Currently, it is measured exclusively through financial factors, but a BSC would allow the organisation to anticipate future outcomes (leading indicators) as well as displaying past performances (lagging indicators).

Figure 4 outlines the linkage between vision and the strategic objectives and key performance indicators (KPIs).

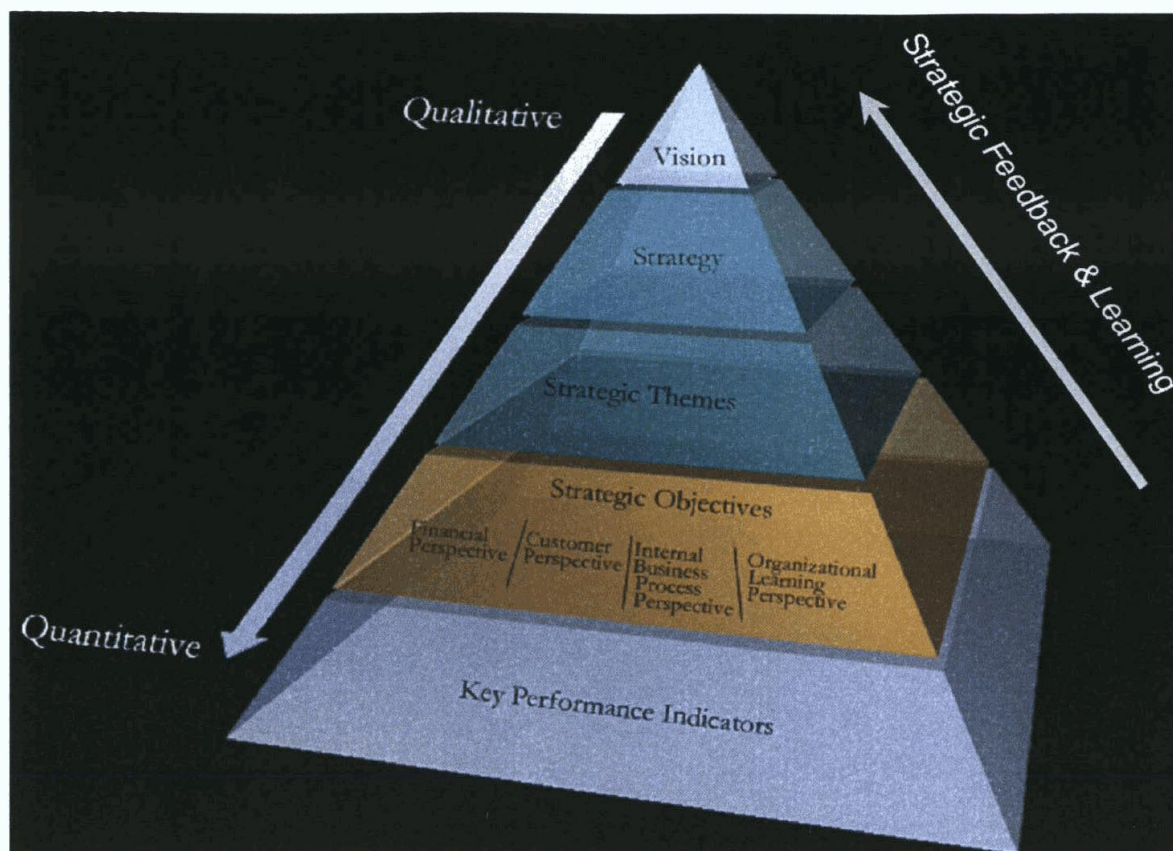


Figure 4 Balanced Scorecard

The HR function, according to David Ulrich (1998), is crucial to organisations achieving excellence. Excellence, according to Ulrich, comes through a focus on learning, quality, teamwork, re-engineering, knowing how things get done within an organisation and also how people get treated. All of these are HR issues and hence achieving organisational excellence requires the work of HR. Ulrich suggests that given the business challenges that organisations face today, success depends on organisations building core capabilities such as speed, responsiveness, agility, learning capacity and employee competence.

2.5. How SHRM Can Add Value to an Organisation

Value must be defined precisely from the perspective of the end customer in terms of a specific product with specific capabilities offered at a specific price and time.

Ulrich (1997) suggests that refocusing HR practice on the value chain including suppliers and customers and less on activities within the firm can have profound implications. He suggests that this shift redirects attention from the firm to the value chain in which it is embedded. He goes on to outline how HR practice should be

applied to suppliers, customers and employees weaving value chain teams and networks.

This emphasises the fact that HR practitioners need to show the effectiveness of HR management and the strong relationship between key metrics and HR in order to become the driver of business success.

2.5.1. Value Creation

The HR function has a responsibility for creating a people strategy, and for bringing it to the management for approval and execution. Quinn & Brockbank (2006) suggest that to meet the requirements of customers and investors, HR programs should leverage the concept of HR professionals as creators of competitive advantage. Each and every activity that they carry out impacts customer's and shareholder's alike.

Becker et al., (2001) highlighted that the more a HR professional understood how the business operated the more value they add. This understanding allows the HR professional to mould organisational processes and programs to meet the needs of the changing business environments. It is crucial to understand that theory is not a magic bullet but must be adapted to meet each unique situation.

2.5.2. Domains of HRM Added Value in the Organisation

Spencer (1995) distinguishes three main domains in which HRM adds value in the organisation (Figure 5):

1. Strategic - this is the main domain of added value.
2. Services - this is the second most important domain for added value.
3. Administration - this is the domain of least added value.

Spencer outlined how HR's main added value is situated in the strategic domain and second in HR services. Administration added the least, however the spend on these three domains was the reverse with administration costing the most and strategic the least.

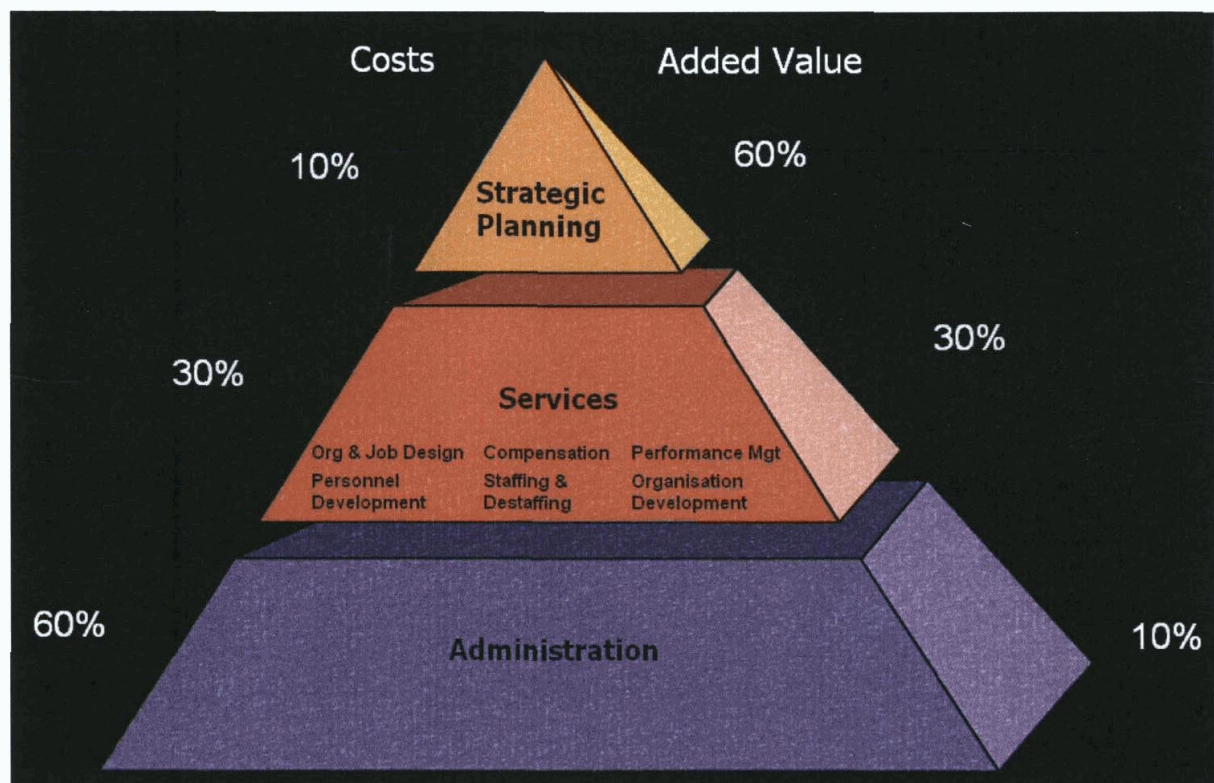


Figure 5 Spencer's Cost versus Added Value

Spencer suggested that in order to increase added value, HR has to refocus its activities by outsourcing costly but less value-creating activities outlined in Figure 6.

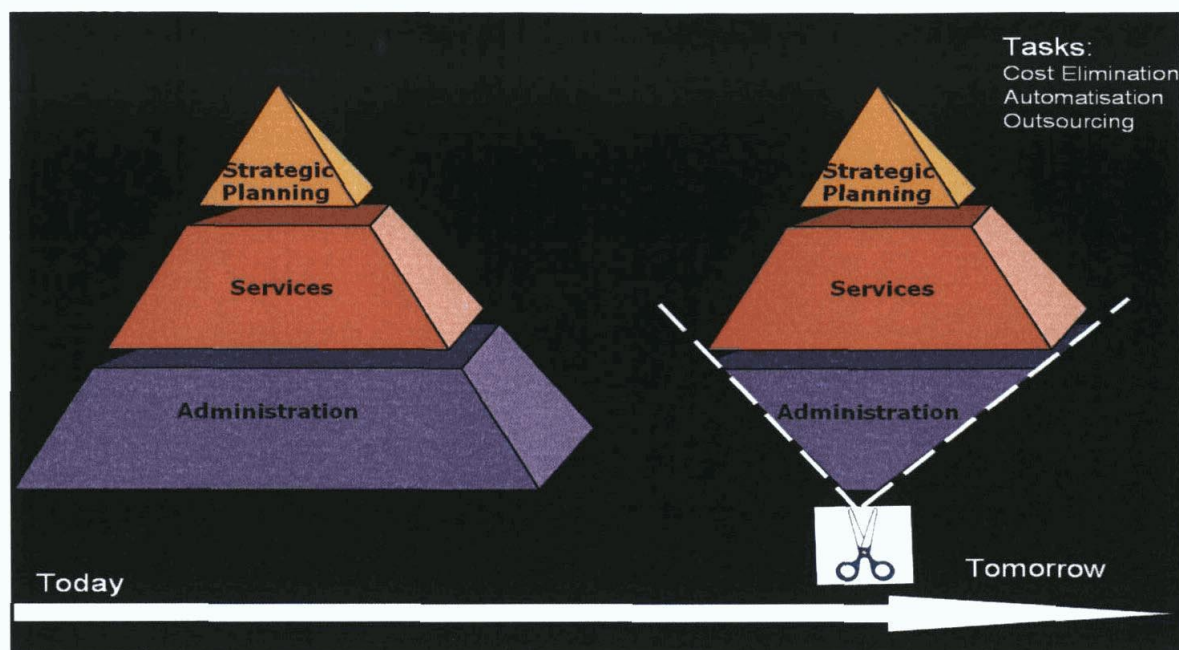


Figure 6 Spencer's Future Tasks

2.5.3. HR in Decision Making and How it Adds Value

Buyens, Ans de Vos (2001) suggests that HR should be value driven in the following areas depending on the time of involvement in the process (Figure 7). If involved in decision making at the start, HR is value driven, and can shape the change process and culture. The later the involvement the less the value added.

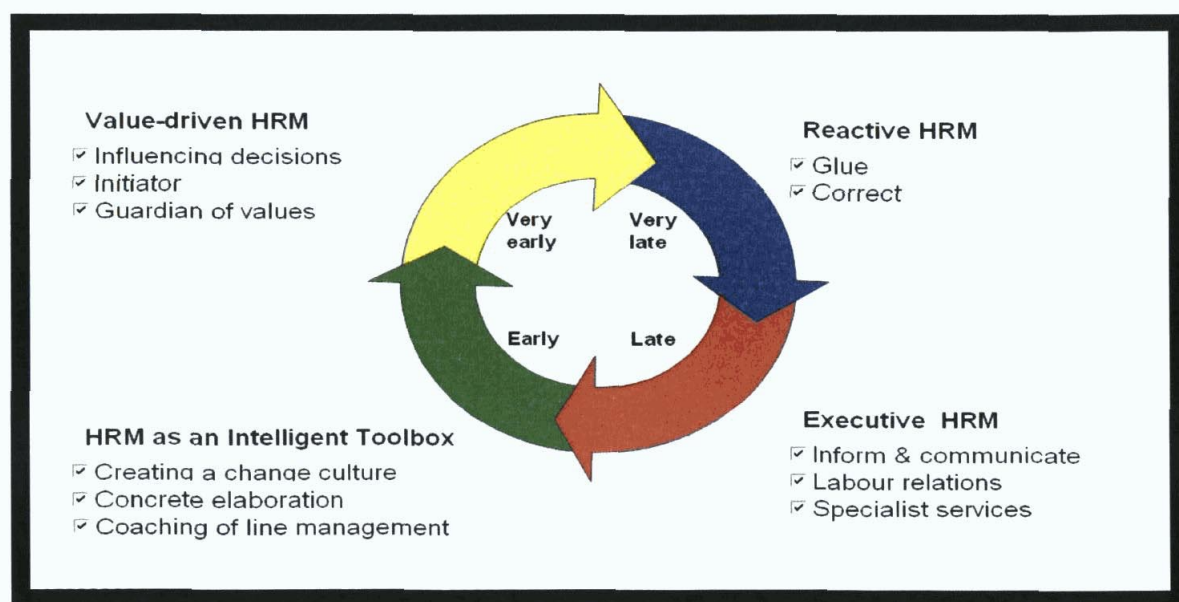


Figure 7 Added Value of HRM

2.5.4. Communication, Communication, Communication

Ulrich (1997) highlighted the need for clarity of messages from top management and from HR. He states that,

“Communication programs become critical vehicles for sharing information with employees and thus become part of the HR agenda.”

Communicating the message is a vital way of building relationships with key stakeholders. Communication Theory suggests that a network's potential benefits grow exponentially as the number of nodes (i.e. contacts) builds and expands. Baker (1996) points out that repeated interaction encourages cooperation. But HR professionals must be a tactful judicious supplier of information and a trustworthy, responsible user of information.

Evans (2003) suggests that HR practitioners need to consider; what is the most appropriate communications medium given the type of change being introduced. Evans goes on to outline that often the largest percentage of an organisation's communications resources goes into approaches that fall into the formal category.

Becker and Husiled, (1999) stated that

“communications plays a significant role in managing change. Effective communication has been highlighted in the high performance models of HRM and in the context of change it is crucial in ensuring that the various parties retain an open mind and perceive the message that were really intended by others.”

2.6. A Seat at the Top Table

“HR has come to the proverbial fork in the road. One leads to a highly automated employee services operation the other leads straight to the CEO's office.”

Thomas.A. Stewart (CIPD, 1996, URL)

Samuel refers to research which shows that 20 years ago 76% of companies had HR directors on their board, today its 64%. He suggests that HR is becoming more operational. His argument is that if people are your most important asset that this figure should be on the increase.

Palmer (2008, URL) in a recent report by PA consulting said: -

"In previous downturns and recession it is always the companies that have retained the best people that have come out stronger"

This suggests the importance of strategic level HR decision making reinforcing the concept of HR at the top table.

Losey, Meisinger, Ulrich (2005, p120) states that,

"There is a seat at the table for a productivity czar-and we (HR) should be in it"

Banfield, Kay (2008 p. 354), outline that,

"The value add is the impact that the function makes (HR) that determines its status and whether others see it as worthy of a seat at the top table"

They go on to say the HR should be a partner in strategy execution,

"This doesn't mean that hr should take responsibility for HR and business strategy, which is rightly the domain of the chief executive, but that the head of the HR department should be an equal partner with other senior managers and should have a seat at the top table."

2.7. *Blueprint for the Future – HR Value Proposition*

Ulrich & Brockbank (2005) state that HR professionals must declare, live and encourage moral principles. They believe that a HR value proposition goes beyond values. Value also means that someone receives something of worth from a transaction. A value proposition has six important implications for HR professionals (Figure 8).

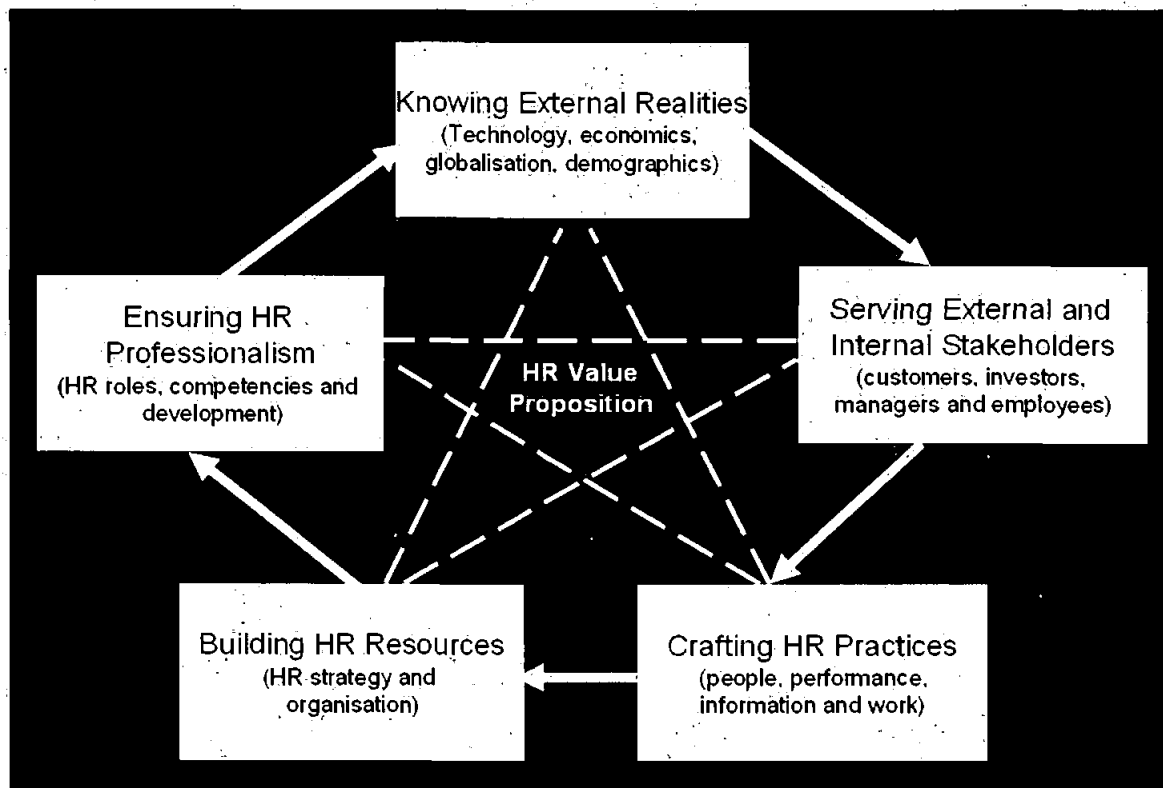


Figure 8 The HR Value Proposition

When HR professionals have a full knowledge of the above they will be delivering real and visible value and the business audience will listen to them, this is Ulrich's & Brockbank's value proposition. When HR professionals begin with the receiver in mind, they can more quickly emerge as full strategic contributors; add greater value for key stakeholders (customers, investors, line managers and employees); enhance business productivity; achieve measurable and valuable results; create sustainable competitive advantage; and have more fun in their careers.

Ramlall (2006) outlines transformational HR activities that have been proven to add more value to the bottom line.

1. Strategic planning,

2. Organisational development,
3. Knowledge management

Despite this there is still a significant amount of time being invested in routine transactional HR activities such as recruiting, training and pay review/awards. Cascio (2005) believes that the key to successful HR is the elimination of routine HR activities so that the HR function can concentrate on more value added activities.

Kaplan & Norton (2001) outline how the most successful organisations engage their employees in the strategic process, since it is employees who will be executing the strategy.

Hewitt (2005) outlines how new mind-sets need to develop in order to connect strategy and HR. Lawler (2005) sees business partnership as the best way for HR to add more value to a company.

2.8. Conclusion

SHRM can deliver a strategic contribution to the organisation by enhancing the company's competitive advantage by adding real and measurable economic value. This is the key to unlocking whether HR can deliver a strategic contribution.

Ulrich & Brockbank (2005) believe that to start transformational HR you must first start by defining what HR value is. To do this you must identify the value of HR services to the customer. The value of HR can only be defined by the customer not by the HR professionals themselves. Through this transformation process the actions taken by HR professionals will have a greater impact in the organisation.

A key to the success of any organisation is how it deals with business pressures from its environment. Critical to this is a strategic plan which charts the future direction of the organisation. The success of any strategic human resources plan, programme or initiative is its alignment with the overall strategic vision, goals and objectives. To provide value-added activities the HR department must move up the value chain and provide service-orientated outputs similar to those outlined above in line with overall strategic direction and therefore add competitive advantage.

HR must move from being a central shared service to being a corporate enabler for change and service provision driving the organisation to get to the future first (Hamel

& Prahalad 1994). Failure to do this will lead to strategic dissonance in light of business pressures.

By measuring and tracking targeted customers and customer value proposition, HR experts can have a direct positive impact on customer share and then on the bottom line. That requires relationship management. HR experts have the ideal skills, background and position to assist in developing these relationships (Ulrich & Brockbank, 2005).

CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY

“Whenever you see a successful business, someone once made a courageous decision.” Peter Drucker

3.1. Introduction

Having reviewed a wide range of literature on SHRM, it became clear that the issue was complex and to investigate fully would require work beyond the time available for this dissertation. It would not be possible to reach a conclusive solution from the research on how best SHRM could add value to RTÉ. The chosen research strategy will allow ongoing work using this dissertation as a first step.

3.2. Research Philosophy

Research is the addition to knowledge by answering an unanswered question. It is the transformation of what we believe is true into what we know is true (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

3.2.1. Epistemological Stance

“The epistemological question, which deals with the nature of the relationship between the researcher and what can be known” (Adam & Healy, 2000, p47).

From a philosophical perspective the epistemological stance of the researcher is one of critical post positivism. My position has evolved during the life of the dissertation. From the outset my position was similar to that outlined by Robson (2002, p27) when he stated “that post positivist researchers can be viewed as recognising, sometimes reluctantly, that the battle for positivism has been lost.” On my journey my epistemological position evolved to a realisation that knowledge is “relative rather than absolute” (Patton, 2002 p92). My embracing of interpretivism provided the best explanation of the social aspect of SHRM. This epistemological stance advocates that it is necessary for the researcher to understand differences between humans in our social role as actors. It is necessary to understand the differences between humans in our role as social actors and the emphasis it places on conducting research among people (Saunders et al., 2007).

Guba & Lincoln's (1994) original table shows the constructivist paradigm, instead of the interpretivism paradigm. According to Schwandt (1994) both are interchangeable hence my use of the term interpretivism. The table also shows post-positivism but the subtle differences as such are beyond the scope of this study.

3.2.2. Ontological Stance

The ontological stance deals with the form and nature of reality, i.e. what is it that can be known about the world (Adam & Healy, 2000). Objectivism portrays the position that social entities exist in reality external to social actors concerned with their existence. The ontological stance of the researcher regarding the nature of reality would be one of subjectivism in that social phenomena are created from the perceptions and consequent actions of the social actors. Remenyi et al., (1998, p. 36) stress the necessity to study

"the details of the situation to understand the reality working behind them."

3.3. Research Objectives and Methodologies

Adam & Healy (2000, p47) describe a methodology as dealing with the ways in which the inquirer can go about finding out what he or she believes can be known.

A methodology suggests an approach to a problem that is implemented through a research programme; it provides guidelines rather than being prescriptive on how research should be conducted. Table 3 outlines the methodologies that satisfy the research objectives.

No.	Objectives	Methodology
1.	Gain an understanding of strategic human resource management and how it can add value to an organisation.	Carry out a literature review and synthesise existing academic literature in order to gain an understanding of strategic human resource management and how it can add value to an organisation.
2.	Identify if the RTE Human Resource (HR) unit does deliver a strategic contribution.	Carry out a discovery process with key strategic actors (Primary Data).
3.	Build upon the knowledge gained in order to suggest enhancements to the future delivery of strategic contributions in RTE.	Analysis and interpretation of literature review, questionnaire data (Primary Data) and current strategic plans, human resource plans and practices (Secondary Data) in order to suggest enhancements to the future delivery of strategic contribution.

Table 3 Objectives and Methodology

3.4. Research Approach

Saunders et al., suggest two research approaches: deduction testing theory similar to scientific research and induction building theory following data collection.

Brewster (1999) outlines how HRM research is focused on understanding what is different between and within management in various contexts and what the background of those differences is. Hence the research approach used is inductive.

3.5. Research Strategy

The researcher is proposing the use of action research as a research strategy because it is a reflective process to problem-solving.

Checkland (1990) sets out the action research cycle of theory and practice (Figure 9). Theory and practice inform each other in a never-ending spiral. Neither is independent of the other or "grounded."

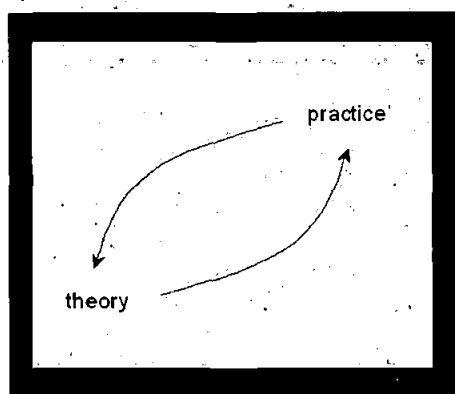


Figure 9 Checkland's Action Research Cycle

He also stresses the importance of defining the methodology in advance of the research. This allows conceptual separation between theory, which is embodied in the methodology and practice; enabling the reflection and comparison which leads to learning about both.

There is a growing body of evidence of the positive personal and professional effects that engaging in action research has on the practitioner (Goswami & Stillman, 1987). Action research provides the opportunity to gain knowledge and skill in research methods and applications and to become more aware of the options and possibilities for change (Oja & Pine, 1989)

Saunders et al., (2007) outline four common themes. The purpose of the research: research in action rather than research about action (Coughlan & Brannick, 2005). The researcher is involved in the research. Eden & Huxam (1996) argue that the finding of action research result from involvement with members of an organisation. Action research is a continuous, iterative process of diagnosing, planning, taking action and evaluating used to solve the research issue Figure 10 (Robson, 2002). Finally action research should have implications beyond the immediate project. Eden & Huxam (1996) argue that it is linked to the development of theory.

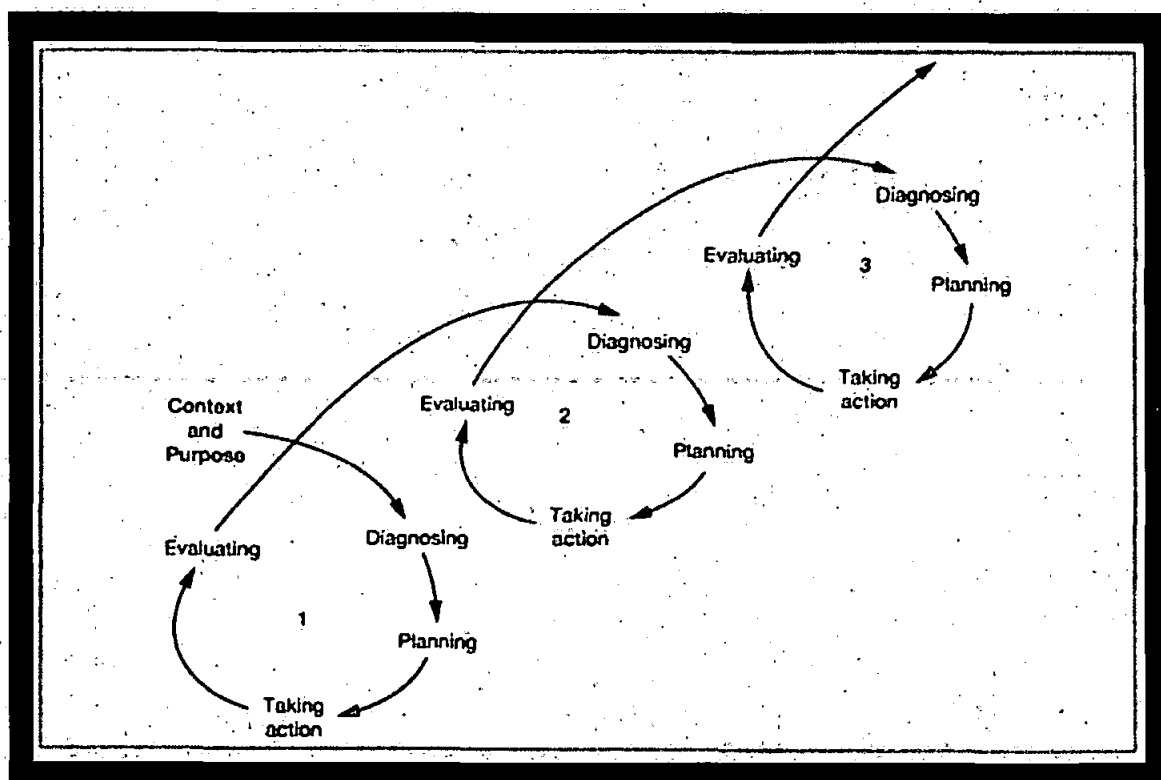


Figure 10 Research Spiral

For these reasons action research is the most suitable methodology as Torbert (2001) suggested: "Knowledge is always gained through action and for action."

3.6. Research Method

Semi-structured interviews are non-standardised; these are often referred to as qualitative research interviews (King, 2004). In semi-structured interviews the researcher will have a list of themes and questions to be covered, although these may vary from interview to interview (Saunders et al., 2007). The researcher intends to use qualitative methods for data collection as part of the data collection the researcher will

carry out a series of in-depth face-to-face interviews with key strategic actors as primary research and a review of academic and organisational documentation as secondary research. This is described by Saunders et al., (2007) as a multi-method qualitative study.

This approach "Multiple Methods" presents a better opportunity to answer the research question as the findings can be triangulated (Saunders et al., 2007) allowing better evaluating of your research findings (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003). In this case the researcher's findings from primary research using interviews, secondary strategic document review and academic review can be cross referenced to ensure appropriate conclusions can be drawn and to better evaluate the extent to which the research findings can be trusted and inferences made from them (Saunders et al.).

The review of the RTE Strategic Corporate Plan 2006-2010 and a number of other key documents will take place prior to the interview process in order to inform the researcher and after the completion of the literature review, to gain an understanding of the organisation's strategic intent.

From the points outlined in the conclusion of the literature review a number of interview questions will be developed to ensure that the research can assess. The questions are listed in Appendix 2. The interviews, lasting about forty minutes were audio recorded and transcribed afterwards. Transcripts from the interviews are listed in Appendix 3.

3.7. Analysis of Data

Tesch (1990) grouped the strategies to deal with data collected into four main categories:

1. Understanding the characteristics of language
2. Discovering regularities
3. Comprehending the meaning of text or action

Reflection

Dey (1993) outlines how the aim of analysis is not just to describe our data, but to describe the objects or events to which our data refers. Such description forms the bedrock of science. He goes on to progress for the initial description of the data;

through the process of breaking down of the data into bits; and then classifying it. By seeing how the bits interconnect we can develop a new account of the data and this provides the basis of a fresh description. The core of qualitative analysis lies in the related process of describing phenomena, classifying it and seeing how our concepts interconnect. This process is outlined in Figure 11.

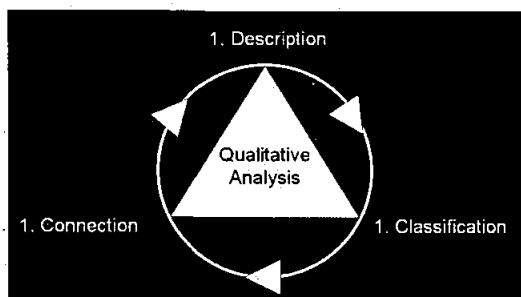


Figure 11 Qualitative Analysis as a Circular Process

Saunders et al., (2007) suggest a general set of procedures to assist in qualitative analysis which are;

1. Categorisation, classifying data into meaningful categories.
2. Unitising data, attaching chunks of data to the appropriate category.
3. Recognising relationships and developing categories to facilitate this.
4. Developing and testing theories to reach conclusions.

To recognise the relationships and to develop the categories Dey, 1993; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Yin, 2003 suggest that a suitable matrix be designed and place the data gathered within its cells, this means that you are engaged in the process of analysing your data. To assist this process from the research question a number of themes will be developed. These themes can be linked to the findings from the data analysis and provide a basis for reflection and insight. A sample of the matrix is outlined in Table 4.

Research Question: - Does HR Deliver a Strategic Contribution		
Theme from Literature Review	Findings from Interviews and Strategic Document Review	Reflection on Findings to Provide Insight into Research Question
Theme 1		
Theme 2		

Table 4 Data Analysis Template

3.8. Selecting a Relevant Research Topic

In selecting a research project you must choose your project with care

1. It meets the examining bodies' requirements.
2. Is the research at the correct level? (Saunders et al., 2007).
3. The researcher must be capable of undertaking and have the required research skill-set.
4. Access to the relevant data (Gill and Johnson 2002) and the relevant actors.
5. There must be sufficient time available to gather the data.
6. The research is capable of being linked to academic theory (Raimond, 1993).

All the above elements have been taken into consideration in the selection and development of the research topic.

3.9. Research Respondents

Head of Corporate Learning & Development Manager has agreed to be the research sponsor. A key element as outlined in the literature review is the definition of what HR value is as defined by the customer rather than the HR professional therefore it is essential that the actors who participate in this process are from outside the HR Department. It is proposed to include the following personnel.

1. Members of the RTÉ Executive Board.
2. Executive Directors of Integrated Business Divisions.
3. Corporate Level Special Advisor.

The researcher has contacted the relevant members of the above groups to agree the availability of five personnel to participate in the interview process and their willingness to be interviewed and has outlined proposed solutions to confidentiality.

3.10. Timescale

The time allowed is sufficient to investigate the research issues subject to the restrictions set out in the limitations of the research. Further investigation of the action research spirals would require additional time and is considered outside the scope of

the research. Appendix 4 outlines project phasing and describes the tasks to be completed, timings and the key milestones to be achieved.

3.11. Resources

The research design and data collection resources are as follows.

Time of Interview participants as outlined above.

Computer and Printer available from Office and Personal resources.

Audio Recording Device and transcription services.

Access to RTE Corporate documentation through the Director General; RTE personal assistant.

3.12. Limitations of the Research

A key limitation is that of time. Action research rationale requires many “action research spirals” (Saunders et al., 2007). The research spiral commences with context and purpose followed by diagnosing, planning, taking action and evaluating.

Due to the time constraints of this research project, it is proposed to limit research to the context and purpose, diagnosing and planning steps of the research spiral. It is suggested that any findings from these steps be recommended as further action after the project is completed.

In terms of action research, with the involvement of the researcher in the system there is surprisingly large scope for unconscious introduction of bias into research (Cameron, 1997).

Another limitation is due to time constraints, particularly due to the current economic downturn, can affect the degree of accuracy and care put into the completion of the action research.

The research will be carried out within RTE using solely RTE personnel.

3.13. Ethical Issues

The key ethical issue in this research process is interviewees’ permission to participate and the use of their responses as part of my primary research. This permission should be assisted by keeping their name anonymous also ensuring that no direct quotes/verbatim identify respondents.

Another issue is the use of strategic documentation which the researcher has received permission to review and comment upon by the project sponsor. The final document is considered by RTE as “commercial in confidence.”

3.14. Conclusion

The choice of action research recognises the need to use different data collection techniques to explore the research question. Action research also allows the researcher to be part of the system that is being analysed and the bias that this can bring to the research must be recognised. Corey (1953) defined action research as: -

“Action Research is the process by which practitioners attempt to study their problems scientifically in order to guide, correct, and evaluate their decisions and actions.”

The iterative nature of action research will guide the researcher to analyse the research question, evaluate current actions therefore leading to more informed management decision making in the future.

CHAPTER 4. ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

"Just because something can be counted, it doesn't mean that it counts." Albert Einstein

4.1. Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to report the facts that the research has discovered. Included are verbatim quotes from interviews with a view to illustrating the richness of the results that have been gathered. There are two key elements to this chapter: Firstly is the presentation of the facts by identifying patterns in the interview data to answer the research question. Secondly to communicate the answer to the research question to academic and RTE management in a clear concise manner.

4.2. Research Subjects

As value is defined by the receiver the research subjects that were interviewed were not part of the HR-unit. The research subjects chosen were internal customers of HR value added services. All research subjects were members of the RTE Executive Board with the exception of a corporate level special advisor. All research subjects agreed to be interviewed with the proviso that no candidates would be identified and the contents would remain confidential due to commercial sensitivities. Verbatim quotes are not attributed to individuals to protect their anonymity. The interviews have been attached in Appendix 3 but the names of the interviewees have been erased. The interview transcripts containing the names of the research subjects are available through the author for any academic follow-up.

4.3. Exploring the Strategic Contribution of RTE's HR Unit

The tapes of the interviews were transcribed into documents for review. These documents were then reviewed and analysed to gain an understanding of the language. This allowed the researcher discover the regularities in each interview and across the interviews. To analyse this qualitative data the researcher created a set of categories based on the themes and sub-themes. This helped gain an understanding of the meaning in the text, in line with the themes identified in the literature review. Following a period of reflection the data was then analysed to gain an understanding of

the strategic contribution of RTE's HR Unit. The analysis of the data is summarised in Table 5 Data Analysis Template

Theme No	Theme from Literature Review	Findings from Interviews and Strategic Document Review
1	Roles of HR	The HR function within the organisation has some of the roles as suggested. The current organisation and roles have been in place since transformation in 2002. Evidence of HR playing a role as a strategic partner and functional expert was evident.
1.1	Transactional Work	Transaction, administrative and routine work carried out in house with the exception of some portions of payroll and executive recruitment.
1.2	Corporate HR	Corporate are responsible for HR policies, procedures, training and development, employee relations but is not active as a strategic partner. Industrial Relations process and partnership seen as a strong skill set. No seat at the Executive Board.
1.3	Embedded HR	6 IBD's. Highly skilled HR people with expertise in their IBD. Know and understand the product so can coach and mentor line managers.
1.4	Centres of Expertise	There are no centres of expertise in the organisation as described
1.5	Operational Executors	Not found to exist - organisation size?
2	HR as a source of competitive advantage	HR Seen to be a source of competitive advantage although at a micro level.
2.1	Rareness and Imitability	Competitive advantage similar to first mover advantage due to the TV licence fee. Public service remit - balanced against this. HR talent management and retention - succession planning provides rareness and is difficult to imitate.
2.2	HR Competencies	High level of skill-set of specific individuals but this was used as a measure of an employee champion and showed weakness in other key HR units. HR is proactive
2.3	Human Capital Management	Appropriate expertise to accomplish business strategy - for example Radio digital project
2.4	Alignment of Strategy and SHRM	Document review. Each IBD has its own chapter in the strategic four year plan and in some cases individual IBD's are not in line with overall corporate. No link between IBD objectives and Corporate HR. Objectives set by Executive Board with Managing Directors of each IBD and no HR consultation - remember no HR seat again at the executive table.

2.5	HR Performance Measurement	Skill-set high level of customer orientation regarding viewership, advertising, talent. Lot of information on operational level. Information regarding H&S, absenteeism, accrued leave with no linkage between the HR strategic value add and what the customer sees as value.
3	HR adds value to the organisation	HR in RTE adds value
3.1	Value Creation	HR heads in IBD's believed by all interviewees to add value (in principal - some more successful than others)
3.2	Domains of HRM Added Value	Between services and administration but not a huge amount of strategic influence.
3.3	HR in Decision Making	HR involvement in decision making is early to late in line with Buyens, Ans de Vos model.
3.4	Communication	Room for improvement acknowledged
4	Seat at the Top Table	RTE since last Feb has a de facto representative at Executive Board level

Table 5 Data Analysis Themes

4.4. The Structure and Role of the HR Unit

A key element in assessing RTE HR unit is to look at it through the lenses of Ulrich's "Roles for HR" and "Roles for HR in large organisations"

Ulrich (2005) suggests "Employees are increasingly critical to the success of organisations."

" an example from radio where some years ago we realised that the skills that engineers needed in radio was essentially skills which are about IT, computers, that you needed people who understood code, protocols and networks and server systems and that you didn't need traditional electrical engineers "

With emerging technologies the need to change skill-sets is evident to the above respondent and the ability of the HR unit to react (or not) is critical to the success or failure of RTE. With the onset of digital radio and television this is critical, as the mover of first advantage requires a lean and agile workforce that can react to change in the business environment. HR's assistance is such a change in skill-set the organisation requires highlights how HR can be a strategic partner by being a change agent.

Research Subject 3 reinforced this by saying,

“HR plays a very important role to ensure that the business adapts to whatever business environment exists.”

Best practice as outlined by academic research suggests the five roles for HR in large organisations. The RTÉ HR Unit has the following elements: -

1. Corporate HR centre which looks after Policies, procedures and processes, employee relations, recruitment,
2. Transactional Worker who are RTÉ employees who carry out day to day low value adding (Spencer, 1995) administrative functions.
3. Embedded HR in the IBD who look after And play the role of functional expert and strategic partner. These HR personnel play the role of business expert, change agent, knowledge manager, and consultant.

There was no evidence of centres of excellence or operational executors as most of the administrative functions are done in-house and there is a limited culture of outsourcing there is currently no need for such and expertise. The review of the corporate literature suggested a role for these functions to help reduce administrative costs and implement new initiatives such as the learning and development and employee relations strategies.

4.5. Recognition of HR as a Source of Competitive Advantage

There was difficulty in identifying the concept of competitive advantage amongst a number of interviewees due to the RTÉ's public service remit. Research subject 1 qualified it in RTÉ as: -

“high calibre and high commitment should mean that the public would get a better service”

Research Subject 3 highlighted the need for strategy to support the business and that

“depends very much on the quality of the strategy in the first place.”

He went on to emphasise the central role of Human Capital as a source of competitive advantage to organisation in the context of the financial overhead of personnel.

"Which means attention to details, which means a high level of professionalism, which calls for consistency and I think if you get that you're significantly adding value to the business, particularly in a business where 50% of the costs are people costs."

Research Subject 4 highlighted the central role HR has in creating in competitive advantage in the future outlined that

"HR I think will be a vital part of that."

In general there is recognition of HR as a source of competitive advantage.

Prahalad (1990) root of competitive advantage recognises the ability of management to consolidate corporate wide technologies and production skills into competencies while adapting to changing opportunities. The example of replacing electrical engineers with ICT personnel is an example of this. More evidence is required regarding the pace of change which the researcher was unable to identify.

Other evidence of HR as a source of competitive advantage is in its own area with the introduction of a Human Resource Information System (HRIS) where research subject 1 outlined that: -

"we saw it with PeopleSoft, we changed the technical solution rather than change our work processes or how we're organised"

The inability of HR to grapple with the change management programme with the implementation of its own HRIS questions whether HR is a source to build strategic level core competencies that are rare and difficult to imitate.

Ulrich (2005) outlines that HR personnel need to be competent; must anticipate change, respond proactively, involving and committing to line managers, being data based, prioritising and ensuring simple successes, remaining close to the customer, and using HR practices to build competitive advantage.

In 2002 a transformation process took place. Research Subject 2 highlighted that HR's input to this process was

"through that transformation process, some of them had been put into HR when they actually didn't have an interest, ability or skills or contribution actually to make. They were sort of perhaps administrative type people, people with administrative skills, forgive me I shouldn't say that but it meant that they didn't know quite what they were at and they were sort of following orders and filling in forms."

Research Subject No 3 confirmed some of the skill mismatches

“But look different people play to different strengths, I think there is a case to be made that perhaps some of our HR people aren’t as vocationally directed as they might have been and trained as well as they might have been for their current roles.”

But this has to be balanced against the commitment of HR Professionals.

“The commitment of all the people that I know is terrific, so that’s very positive.”

To deal with the business pressures on the organisation, RTÉ’s has developed a Strategic Corporate Plan (RTÉ Strategic Corporate Plan SP07). It outlines the following

“Creativity needs to be at the heart of everything we do (RTÉ’s Vision Mission Values P2).”

The RTÉ Strategic Plan outlines the importance of the interdependencies of *“Vision, Mission and Values”* on each other. The relationship acts as a scene setter on how they can be used positively to satisfy the needs of the audience and stakeholders. This Strategic Plan sets the corporate direction for the next five years and outlines the objectives to achieve this (RTÉ Strategic Corporate Plan SP07 P7). Within the organisational structure each Integrated Business Department (IBD) sets out its own strategic plan as part of the overall corporate plan. This ensures linkage to the overall corporate vision, mission and value in line with corporate objectives. Any short and long term output from HR must be in-line with this plan and objectives in order to add value and hence contribute to the organisations revenue streams (RTÉ Annual Report 2007, P 12):

“To create a working environment where staff at all levels have the commitment and capability to deliver on our current business goals and where they are empowered and supported in continually learning and developing to adapt to future change and challenge” (RTÉ Strategic Corporate Plan SP07 P4).

4.6. HR Adds Value to the Organisation

The capacity of HR to deliver a strategic contribution was recognised by all people interviewed. While it was accepted that HR had delivered a strategic contribution in the past particularly since transformation in 2002, it was recognised it had great potential in the future.

Research Subject 1 stated regarding the strategic contribution HR had: -

"I think it does but how do you evaluate that, how do you come to that and went on to say. It's not some kind of second fiddle, it's not some kind of ancillary."

This highlighted the view that HR was considered central to adding value to the organisation he went on to recognise the core skill in the organisation.

"What's the core skill, the core resource that we have here is people's, for want of a better word, creativity"

All Participants recognised that HR had a strategic role to play particularly in the area Human Capital management and the value that it can bring to the organisation.

When HR is involved early in the strategic planning process it can add more value. Buyens, Ans de Vos (2001) outline how if it is involved at the very early stage HRM is value driven and it influences decisions, is an initiator and a guardian of values.

Once the strategic plan had been drawn up HR had to implement. It was not suggested that they be involved in the Planning process.

Research Subject 5 outlined that HR was not involved in the early part of the development of the strategic plan.

"It's probably a bit more the later at the moment, there isn't a huge HR engagement in terms of the development of the strategic plan, it tends to more the strategic plan is developed, it's being rolled out, there are particular targets and ambitions for different areas and HR works then with those areas to deliver to the strategic plan."

As such it is safe to say that HR in RTE is not value driven but lies between the intelligent tool box and executive HRM. This can be assumed as coaching of line management occurs and there is a strong reliance on industrial and employee relations (labour relations) as confirmed by Research Subject 1.

"but by and large our industrial relations in this place are very good and I think that's a tremendous success."

There was a view that HR was a service provider and not a value creator this view was similar to the traditional personnel role outlined by Holbeche (1999). If it added value it did so at the micro level as a HR Service provider as outlined by Armstrong and Long (1994) . For example when asked;

Can the strategic HR management add real economic value? The answer was;

“Certainly it can, I mean if you, for example in the area of industrial relations...”

This was a common thread across all interviews.

“So it’s very important that the HR leadership is more tuned in to what’s required for the audience than what is required for it’s employees or for it’s managers. They don’t always have to be mutually exclusive but there is a priority and the audience should come first.”

One of the key tools of HR professionals is communication, Ulrich stresses this point,

“Communication programs become critical vehicles for sharing information with employees and thus become part of the HR agenda.”

One of the key themes from all the interviews was the possibility of HR as a conduit for communication. Research Subject 1 highlighted

“I’d point to things like the establishment of a staff survey every 2 years with analysis and feedback.”

He went on to highlight that there was a lot more emphasis on communications.

Research subject 4 stated

“Executive board need to re-examine our internal communications and HR is a vital part of that internal communication structure”e.

This was as a result of a staff survey which highlighted poor communication as a recurring issue.

4.7. Seat at the top Table

HR leadership requires collaboration through the organisation.

“Being an HR leader also has implications for leading the HR function, collaborating with other functions, ensuring corporate governance, and monitoring the HR community.”

HR is currently on the company’s organisation chart as a subsection of the Central Shared Services. If the unit is to collaborate with other functions and participate in corporate governance its current position in shared services makes its ability to lead untenable.

Banfield, Kay (2008) suggests that HR should have a seat at the top table.

The RTÉ organisational structure is outlined in Appendix 1. Each of the IBD's has its own HR team devolved to the individual business division with a dotted line into Corporate HR, who reports into Managing Director Corporate Development. The Head of HR is not on the executive board it is the Managing Director Corporate Development the de facto head who represents HR on the Executive board.

There was agreement amongst the Research Subjects that the recent appointment of a de facto representative to the executive board was in the right direction. But this falls short of Banfield and Kay's recommendations.

The decentralised model leads to disparate reporting strands for embedded HR professionals across organisations. Where does the ultimate responsibility lie? Two masters - the Managing Director of the IBD or Head of Corporate HR.

4.8. Conclusion

A key to the success of any organisation is how it deals with business pressures from its environment. Critical to this is a strategic plan which charts the future direction of the organisation. The success of any strategic human resources plan, programme initiative is its alignment with the overall strategic vision, goals and objectives. To provide value added activities within RTÉ the HR department must move up the value chain and provide service orientated outputs similar to those outlined above in line with overall strategic direction and therefore add competitive advantage.

Human Resources must move from being a Central Shared Service to a corporate enabler for change and service provider driving the organisation to get to the future first (Hammel and Prahalad). Failure to do will lead to strategic dissonance in light of business pressures with the advent of Digital Terrestrial Television.

Does HR contribute to the bottom-line of an organisation? Given that several large-scale studies have proven that HRM is a critical driver in an organisation's financial performance, it is imperative for HR and other leaders to understand the critical nature and utmost importance of understanding the effectiveness of all HR activities in creating value for the organisation. It is only through measuring of HRM that one can really articulate the benefits of HR strategies in achieving the organisation's business strategy and in the process enhance the credibility of the HR profession.

CHAPTER 5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The ability to make good decisions regarding people presents one of the last reliable sources of competitive advantage—since very few organisations are very good at it....

Peter Drucker

5.1. Introduction

The objective of this chapter is to provide a synthesis of the material analysed to date. It is hoped to build upon the knowledge gained during the project to enhance future delivery of SHRM in RTÉ. The research question and objectives will be discussed. Analysis of the research data and its synthesis into themes conducted in chapter four will be discussed in an effort to link the findings of chapter four to the literature addressing the research issue, thus identifying and emphasising contributions. A number of recommendations will also be made as to future research projects. Finally, concluding remarks about the overall research journey will be made.

5.2. Discussion

The future business environment for RTÉ will be increasingly turbulent and unpredictable. The effects of the sudden economic downturn (affecting advertising), Irish Government stricter regulation (affecting licence fees) and increased global competition for broadcasting and sport rights (affecting barriers to entry to new market segments) all combine to mean a very difficult time indeed lies ahead for RTÉ.

RTÉ must focus on its human capital and help employees to prepare for the future. This can only be done by HR personnel knowing the external realities such as developments in technology, economics developments, globalisation and trends in demographics. HR personnel development should focus not only on pure HR training and development but expanded horizons by insisting on business qualifications and training to augment their skill set. Today it is not enough to be just a good administrator.

RTÉ vision mission statement focuses on the “Big Idea” or a few key words that express what the purpose and values of the organisation are. The “Big Idea” on its own is not enough. In order to build on commitment and drive improved performance HR has to ensure it (the “Big Idea”) is understood across the organisation.

NUOVA SMOUFI LIBRAR
NATIONAL COLLEGE
IRELAND



HR by its policies, procedures and interventions provide effective support to the elements of the 'Big Idea'. Where this work is well communicated employees are more likely to feel satisfied and buy into the organisation. This then leads to higher levels of organisation commitment, job satisfaction, lower quit rates, greater customer satisfaction, lower levels of dissent.

Ulrich's (developed from Donie Wiley 2008) HR Model is relevant and its fundamentals are outlined in Table 6.

> Strategic Partner
> Functional Expert
> Employee advocate/human capital developer
> HR Leader

Table 6 Ulrich's HR Model

Looking at this through the prism of Ulrich's model.

Strategic Partner: RTE must now re-configure and re-strategise urgently if it is to survive, let alone prosper, in the years ahead. For certain, the future RTE will look and "feel" very different to the one that exists now. HR can be a key enabler in this re-configuration. HR's involvement in this transformation process is crucial to ensure that the future organisations shape is in line with new vision and objectives.

Functional Expert: H.R.'s expertise in this area will be called upon even more due to the need to deliver value for money efficiency in e.g.

- a. Recruitment time and cost
- b. Constraints of Employment streamlining this process, automating it so that it can be undertaken by less skilled HR administration.
- c. HR Systems Analysing and reporting on e.g. employment costs and generally providing top management with timely, accurate management information supporting informed decision making on employee numbers skill competencies and costs.

Employee Advocate/Human Capital: There is a tendency (understandable) for top management to cut back on what they see as non essential employee programmes such as development, benefits, 'perks' etc. However HR will be required to council at times

against this sometimes short term reaction to a (very real) crisis. In order to do this HR will need to adopt a realistic and business case approach when making its agreements.

Ironically enough one of the effects of RTÉ re-structuring is likely to be the re-centralising of the devolved HR “community” and the appointment of a qualified HR head to the executive board.

HR Leader: More so than in the “good times” if HR is to be seen as a leader it will have to prove itself as a strategic partner. To assist in this HR in the future can work increasingly closer with the line to, for instance use internal resources, to develop training, coaching and mentoring programmes

The devolvement of many HR functions to the line in RTÉ includes many HR transactional actions and activities. HR will be required to have a more in-depth knowledge of the devolved transactions to ensure that the process is done and measured correctly. This is the key to mastering the decision science of HR and rethinking the organisation and its agility.

In an ever changing future RTÉ must ensure connectivity to its primary mission, values and objectives. HR will be increasingly challenged in this regard and must add value to these aims. It must fulfil the roles of strategic partner by leveraging the organisations Human Capital, providing informed decision making and being an **Employee Champion**.

Clear, consistent internal communication is central to creating and sustaining a shared mindset of values and ethics in RTÉ. The worldwide web, email and other communication technologies have made it possible for large organisations to communicate in an efficient and speedy manner. HR encourages ‘face-to-face’ dialogue as the key to clarity of message and meaning – this basic but most effective method is supported through use of any of the other methods towards greater understandings.

5.3. Research Question

Exploration of SHRM:

Does RTÉ’s HR Unit deliver a strategic contribution?

It has been illustrated in the previous chapter that the RTÉ HR unit does provide a strategic contribution but not at the macro level described by Armstrong & Long

(1994). In an organisation such as RTE where there is a high level of technical innovation, creativity and artistry the human capital is central to the success of the organisation. The strategic contribution from the HR unit must be at macro level if the organisation is to be at the cutting edge in its business sector.

5.4. Research Objectives

In chapter three the researcher outlined the research objectives for the dissertation and the methodology to achieve them. Table 7 is a reconstructing of Table 3 objectives and methodologies. The purpose of Table 7 is to demonstrate which chapter achieved each objective.

No.	Chapter	Obj. No.	Objective	Methodology
1	Setting the Scene			
2	Literature Review	1	Gain an understanding of strategic human resource management and how it can add value to an organisation.	Carry out a literature review and synthesise existing academic literature in order to gain an understanding of strategic human resource management and how it can add value to an organisation
3	Methodology			
4	Analysis of Results	2	Identify if the RTE Human Resource (HR) unit does deliver a strategic contribution	Carry out a discovery process with key strategic actors (Primary Data).
		3	Build upon the knowledge gained in order to suggest enhancements to the future delivery of strategic contributions in RTE.	Analysis and interpretation of literature review, questionnaire data (Primary Data) and current strategic plans, human resource plans and practices (Secondary Data) in order to suggest enhancements to the future delivery of strategic contribution.
5	Discussion and Conclusions	3	Build upon the knowledge gained in order to suggest enhancements to the future delivery of strategic contributions in RTE.	Analysis and interpretation of literature review, questionnaire data and current strategic plans, human resource plans and practices in order to suggest enhancements to the future delivery of strategic contribution.

Table 7 Chapters, Objectives and Methodologies

5.5. Recommendations

It is recommendation that the people who work for the embedded personnel in any restructuring of the organisation become the operational executors with responsibility for individual casework, operational tasks, analysis and reporting, delivering initiatives, implementing business initiatives, or implementing initiatives from the centres of expertise. They should be tasked with transforming the business requirements driven by embedded HR professionals into an operational plan with innovative HR practices that are driven by centres of expertise.

The Head of HR must have “Command” of HR personnel and not a dotted line to embedded personnel in the IBD’s. This is not possible as part of a shared services centre on the side of the organisation chart. The only solution is a seat at the top table without compromise. Tokenism in the form of HR being answerable to the head of Managing Director Corporate Development will not suffice. If HR are to collaborate with the other functions in RTE, play a role in Corporate Governance and monitor the HR and business community.

Due to the heavy reliance on the elements of a high level of technical expertise and the need for highly creative/artistic personnel it has meant that the focus on the skill-set and calibre of HR professional may not be as sharp. Due to the high financial commitment in personnel the cost of getting HR decisions wrong carries a huge risk. To mitigate against this risk the calibre and skill-set of HR personnel must also be of a very high standard. HR must not be the “dumping ground” for staff who fall below expectations in other areas. A succession plan should be developed across the HR function to plan the career paths of all HR personnel.

A HR professional development program should be initiated to train inline with Ulrich (2005) blueprint for the future, the HR value proposition. This will ensure that HR professionals have a full understanding of

1. External realities of the business environment.
2. Are aware of external and internal stakeholders needs.
3. Can craft HR practice to add value.
4. Have an awareness of the HR resources they are building.
5. Are professionally committed and competent.

The development and implement an internal communications policy and system. This system will assist HR Professionals as a value added service in spreading the corporate message.

The strategic role of HR is to fundamentally impact on the organisation at every level. HR must maximise and align itself to all the corporate objectives of RTÉ. Its focus is to add value directly and indirectly to the bottom line both long term and on a day to day basis.

5.6. Future Work

Future research work that must be undertaken should be in the in a number of areas.

1. HR in communications and how it can add value to the organisation
2. Why HR should have a seat at the top table.
3. Training needs of HR professionals

5.7. Conclusion

This thesis has been a personal journey for me. Along the way I have come to realise what a complex world we live in. In this environment we are asked to make real-world decisions that affect our own lives, the lives of others, the organisations we work in and society as a whole. The way we make decisions must be taken in the context of our own bias, the context of our working environment and that of society. Gaining an understanding of this for me has been the most rewarding aspect of this personal journey.

The success of any HR organisation or initiative should not be measured by how well it is planned, designed, implemented or reviewed but on how it adds value to the organisation by creating competitive advantage that can be sustained into the future. This is the key to the organisations success in the future in light of technological changes such as DTT, economic trends driven by the current global downturn, Ireland and the worlds changing demographics and the globalisation of the world's market place.

The film, "The Right Stuff (Kaufman, 1983)" outlined the qualities needed to take man to the moon. Similarly, RTÉ must find the right calibre of HR professional and organisation that understands our new business challenges and act at an operational,

tactical and strategic level. The key issue for RTÉ is to recognise its Human Capital as an intangible resource that is rare and difficult to imitate and the key to future competitive advantage.

BIBLOGRAHY

- Adam, F. Healy, M. (2007) *Postgraduate Research In a Business Area*, Blackhall Publishing, Dublin
- Aristotal, 384-BC-322 BC, Ancient Greek Philosopher, Scientist and Physician
- Armstrong M. (2006) *Handbook of Human Resource Management Practice*, Kogan Page, Limited, London
- Armstrong, M., Long, P., (1994) *The Reality of Strategic HRM*, IPD, London
- Baker, W. (1996) Building Inteligent Networks. In Myers P.S. (ed), *Knowledge Management and Organisational Design*. Butteworth-Heinemann.
- Becker, B., Huselid, M., Ulrich, D., (2001) *The HR Scorecard: Linking People, Strategy and Performance*, Harvard Business School Press
- Paul Banfield, P., Kay, R., (2008) *Introduction to Human Resource Management*, Oxford University Press
- Brewster, C., and Harris, H., *International Human Resource Management: Contemporary Issues in Europe*, (eds.) Routledge, 1999
- Brewster, C., Different Paradigms in Strategic HRM: questions raised by comparative research in Wright, P., Dyer, L., Boudreau, J. and Milkovich, G. (eds), *Research in Personnel and HRM*, JAI Press Inc, Greenwich, Connecticut 1999
- Butler, J.E., Ferris, G.R., & Napier N. 1991. *Strategy and human resource management*. Cincinnati, OH; Southwestern Publishing Co.
- Buyens D. De Vos A. 1999. The added value of the HR-department. In Brewster & H. Harris (Eds.). *International HRM: Contemporary Issues in Europe*. Routledge.
- Carmeron, S. (1997) *The MBA handbook: Study Skills For Managers* (2nd Ed) Pitman Publishing
- Cascio, W. (2003). *Managing Human Resources: Productivity, Quality of Work Life, Profits* (6th ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill Education.
- Cascio, W. F. (2005). *From Business Partner to Driving Business Success*, 44, pp. 158, 164.
- Checkland, P. (1999) *Systems Thinking, Systems Practice: Including a 30-year retrospective* Chishester: Wiley
- Checkland, P. & Scholes, J. (1990) *Soft systems methodology in action*. Chichester: Wiley.
- CIPD (2003) *HR survey, where we are, where we're heading*: London: CIPD. Available at <http://www.cipd.co.uk/subjects/hrpract/hrtrends/hrsurvey.htm>
- Corey, S. (1953). *Action research to improve school practice* New York: Teachers College: Columbia University.
- Coughlan, D. and Brannick, T. 2005: *Doing action research in your own organisation*. (2 ed.) Sage Publications.
- Dey, I. (1993) *Qualitive Data Analysis*, Routledge, London
- Drucker P/F. (1992) *Managing for the Future* Butterworth Heinemann, Oxford
- Eden, C. / Huxham, C. 1996: AC Eden, C Huxham (1996), "Action research for the study of organizations", Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA,
- Einstein A, 1879 -1955 Theoretical Physicist
- Evans, C. (2003). *Managing for Knowledge: HR's strategic role*, Amsterdam: Function in Transformation. *Human Resource Planning*, 17(3), pp. 1-16.
- Gallier, R., Land, F., (1987), *Choosing Appropriate Information Systems Research Methodologies*. *Communication of the ACM*

http://is.lse.ac.uk/phdprog/IS555_Outline_2001-2.pdf

Gill, J. and Johnson, P., (1991), *Research Methods for Managers*, Paul Chapman Publishing, London

Goswami, D., & Stillman, P. R. (Eds.). (1987) *Reclaiming the classroom: Teacher research as an agency for change* Upper Montclair, NJ: Boynton/Cook. ED 277 022

Guba, E., & Lincon, Y., (1994) *Competing Paradigms in Qualitative Research, Handbook of Qualitative Research* Sage Publications

Guest, D., (1998), *Human Resource Management, Trade Unions and Industrial Relations*, in Mabey, C., Salaman, G., Storey, J. (Eds), *Strategic Human Resource Management: a Reader*, Sage, London.

Hamel, G. Prahalad. C.K. (1994) *Competing for the Future*, Harvard Business School Press US

Hammer, M., Champy, J. *Reengineering the Corporation, A manifesto for Business Revolution* London: Nicholas Brealey Publishing

Hewitt, G. (2005). *Connecting Strategy and HR: Establishing a New Logic of Partnership*. In Losey, M. (ed.), *Future of Human Resource Management: 64 Thought Leaders Explore the Critical HR Issues of Today and Tomorrow*. Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Holbeche, L. (1999) *Aligning Human Resources and Business Strategy*, Butterworth Heinemann.

Holbeche, L., 1999 *Traditional HR Roles* URL: <http://www.download-it.org/>

Johnson, Scholes, Whittington (2008) *Exploring Corporate Strategy*, 8th Ed, Prentice Hall

Kaplan R., Norton, D., (1996) *The Balanced Scorecard: Translating Strategy into Action*, Harvard Business School Press

Kaplan R., Norton, D., (1996) *The Strategy Focused Organisation: How balanced Scorecard Companies Thrive in the New Business Environment*: Harvard Business School Press

Kaplan, R.S., Norton, D.P. (2001), "Transforming the balanced scorecard from performance measurement to strategic management: part I", *Accounting Horizons*, Vol. 15 No.1, pp.87-104.

King, N. (2004) *Using interviews in qualitative research*, In Cassell, C. and Symon, G. (eds), *Essential Guide to Qualitative Methods in Organisational Research*, Sage, London

Lawler, E., III (2005). *From Human Resource Management to Organisational effectiveness*. In Losey, M., *Future of Human Resource Management: 64 Thought Leaders Explore the Critical HR Issues of Today and Tomorrow*. Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

London: Sage Publications.

Losey, M., Meisinger, S. Ulrich, D., (2005) *The Future of Human Resource Management: 64 Thought Leaders Explore the Critical HR Issues of Today and Tomorrow* John Wiley & Sons

Malik, N. (2009) *Emergence of Strategic Human Resource Management Historical Perspective* [Internet] Academic Leadership Live; The online Journal . URL <http://www.academicleadership.org/emprical_research/338.shtml > [Accessed 19 June, 2009

McLeod, R., Jr., Schell, G. (2000) *Management Information Systems* 8 Edn, Prentice Hall New Jersey

Miles, M., Huberman, a., (1994) *Qualitative Data Analysis* (2nd ed), Thousand Oaks, CA, Sage.

Mohrman S. Lawler E., III, (1999) *Creating the Strategic Business Partnership* pg 437, In Schuler, R., Jackson, S., *Strategic Human Resource Management* Blackwell, Oxford

National Agreement 1996 (Partnership 2000) Government Publications Office

New Oxford Dictionary of English, Clarendon Press

Oja, S., & Pine, G., (1989). *Collaborative action research: Teachers' stages of development and school contexts* Peabody Journal of Education

Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Pfeffer 1994

Porter, M., (1980) *Competitive Strategy*, Free Press, New York Practitioner-Researchers, Blackwell Publishing, Oxford, UK

Porter, M.E., (1985) *Competitive Advantage: Creating and Sustaining Superior Performance*, Free Press

Prahalad, C., Hamel, G., 1990, The Core Competence of the Corporation: *Harvard Business Review*, May/June, 79-91

Quinn, R. W. & Brockbank, W. (2006). The Development of Strategic Human Resource

Raimond, P. (1993) *Management Projects: Design Research and presentation*, Chapman and Hall: London

Ramlall, S., (2006). Identifying and Understanding HR Competencies and their Relationship to Organisational Practices: *Applied H.R.N Research, Volume 11, Number 1*

Remenyi, D., Williams, B., Money, A. and Swartz, E. (1998) *Doing Research in Business and Management: An Introduction to Process and Method*. London, Sage Publications.

Robson, C. (2002), *Real World Research: A Resource for Social Scientists and*

Rothwell, W.J. (1994). The Background and Purpose of HRD. *Human Resources Development Quarterly*, 45.

Rousseau, D., Wade-Bernoni, K., (1995) Changing Individual-Organisation Attachments. A Two-way street. In Howard, A., (Ed.), *The changing nature of work*, San Francisco, Jossey-Bass

RTE Strategic Corporate Plan 2007 – 2011 SP07

RTE Five Year Objectives; RTE 2007

Samuel, P., URL:

http://www.paconsulting.com/news/about_pa/2008/final_destination_hr_in_the_future.htm

Saunders, M., Lewis, P., Thornhill, A., (2007) *Research Methods for Business Students 4th Ed* Prentice Hall

Schuler, R.S., Jackson, S.e., Storey, J. (2001) HRM and its links with strategic management, In Storey, J. (Ed.), *Human resources management: A critical text*. London and Boston: ITP.

Schwandt, T., (1994) Constructivist, interpretivist approaches to human inquiry, in *Handbook of qualitative research* (1994) Denzin, Norman K.; Lincoln, Yvonna S.. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Sir Winston Churchill W., (1874 - 1965) British Politician

Society For Human Resource Management. [Internet]
<<http://www.shrm.org/Pages/default.aspx>>

Spencer, L., (1995) *Reengineering Human Resources: Achieving Radical Increases in Service Quality with 50% to 90 % Cost and Headcount reductions*. New York Wiley

Tashakkori, A., Teddlie, C. (eds.). (2003). *Handbook of mixed methods in social and behavioural research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Tesch, R. (1990) *Qualitative Research: Analysis Types and software tools*, New york, Falmer

The Handbook of Action Research: Participative inquiry and practice (pp. 250-260).

- Torbert, W. R. (2001). The Practice of Action Inquiry. In P. Reason & H. Bradbury (Eds.), *The Handbook of Action Research: Participative inquiry and practice* (pp. 250-260). London: Sage Publications.
- Ulrich, D. Brockbank, W., (2005) *HR The value Proposition* Harvard Business School Press
- Ulrich, D.(1997). *Human Resource Champions: The Next Agenda for Adding Value and Delivering Results*. Boston: Harvard Business School Press.
- Ulrich, D.(1998). *Delivering Results: A new mandate for Human Resource Professionals*. Boston: Harvard Business School Press.
- Ulrich, D., (1991) *Organizational Capability as a Competitive Advantage*, Academy of Management Executive
- Walker J., (1992) *Human Resource Strategy*, McGraw-Hill, New York
- Wiley, D., (2008) *BA (Hons) Human Resource Management, Course Notes* National College of Ireland
- Wofford, T. (2002). Competitive Advantage: Strategy & Human Resources. *Journal of Applied Management & Enterneupreship*, 7(1), 135-147
- Yeung, A.; Brockbank, W. & Ulrich, D. (1994). *Lower Cost, Higher Value: Human Resource Function in Transformation*. *Human Resource Planning* Human Resource Planning Society Volume: v17 Issue: n3 Page: p1(16)

APPENDIX 1

Company Overview – Radio Telefis Éireann

Company Overview – Radio Telefís Éireann

Introduction

RTÉ is a statutory corporation created by the Broadcasting Act 1960 as amended by subsequent Acts. New broadcasting legislation is imminent and will be critical from RTÉ's point of view. Essentially the new legislation will introduce increased regulation into the broadcasting environment in Ireland and will affect negatively RTÉ's revenue raising capacity as well as its ability to secure access to license fee income

Strategy

At the head of RTÉ's strategy lies the dictum:

Putting the Audience First

Thus RTÉ strives at all times to server its audience with service offerings that satisfy a real need of its key customer segment – the people of Ireland (and not just the people *in* Ireland). To do that RTÉ must take account of a number of key issues including:

1. The continuing entrance of new operators into the broadcasting arena
2. The continued consolidation of formerly competing media – which increases their power and reach
3. The increasing number of unregulated TV Broadcasters operating in Ireland, targeted at the Irish market
4. Technological advances continue to lead to increasing turbulence in the environment

RTÉ's strategy is to:

1. Grow revenues
2. Control and manage costs
3. Set the standard for quality output and content in Ireland
4. Be a technology leader

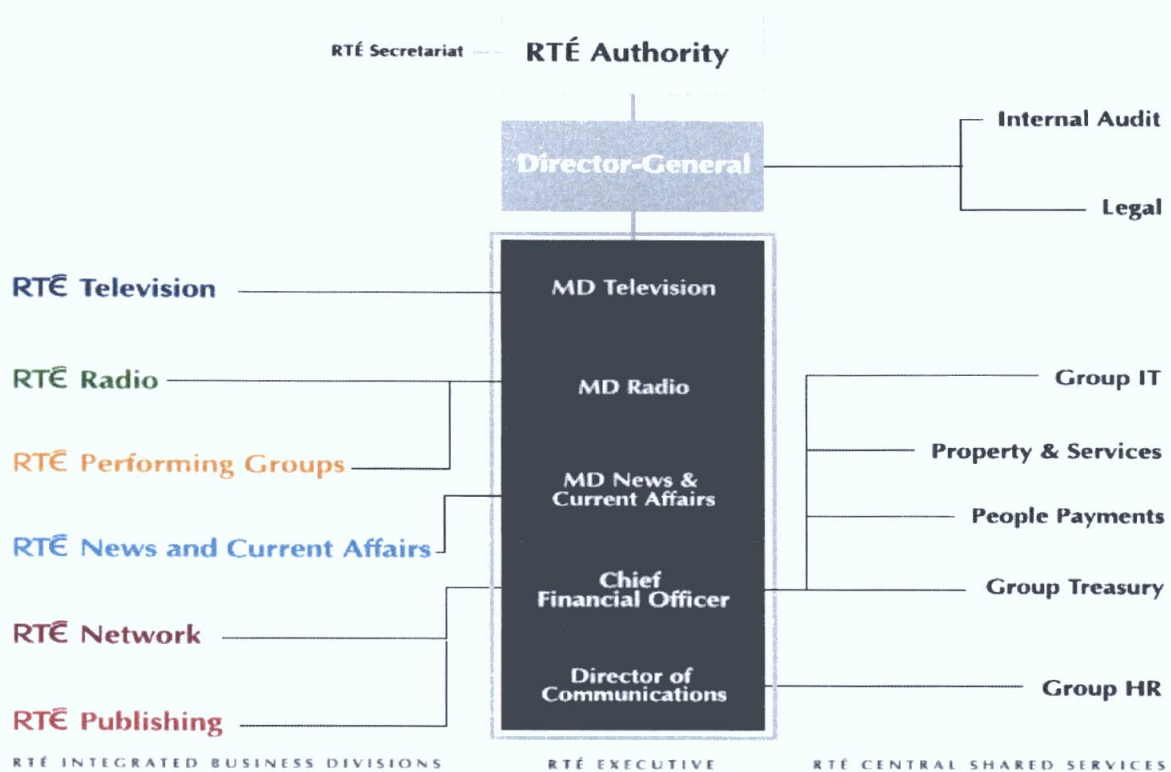
RTÉ has a rolling 5-year plan to ensure implementation of these goals.

Structure

RTÉ is divided into five integrated business divisions (IBDs). These are:

- Television
- Radio
- News
- Publishing
- Networks

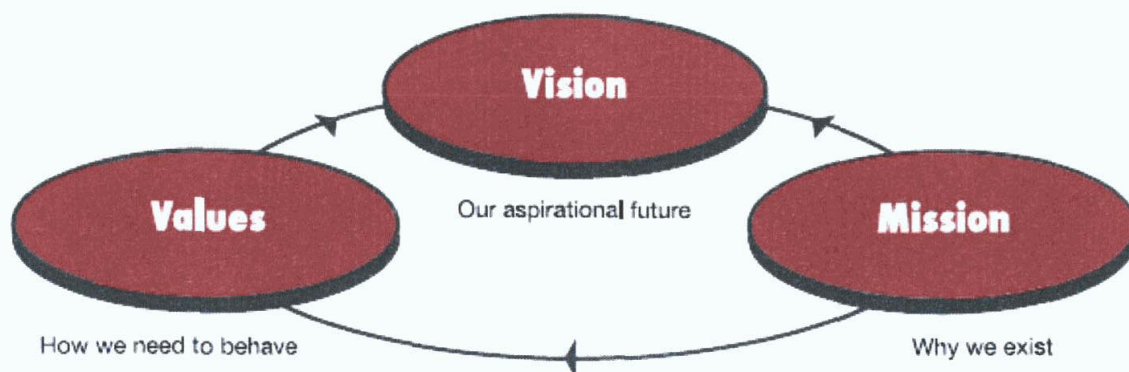
- Performing Groups



<p>RTÉ Television</p> <p>RTÉ operates two complementary free-to-air television channels:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RTÉ One - the home of authoritative television news and current affairs coverage of national and international stories. A comprehensive range of home-produced Irish factual, entertainment, drama and lifestyle programming is complemented by selected acquired material. • RTÉ Two - a mixed-genre channel appealing to niche audiences across the schedule. During daytime its primary focus is children and sports; in the evening it targets viewers of a young mindset with innovative drama, entertainment and key acquisitions. 	<p>RTÉ Radio</p> <p>RTÉ operates four radio stations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RTÉ Radio 1 - with news, information, feature strands, debate and sport. • RTÉ 2fm - the national leader in talk and popular music for the under-35s. • RTÉ lyric fm - a classical music and arts channel. • RTÉ Raidió na Gaeltachta - an Irish language service, similar in content to RTÉ Radio 1 but with special attention paid to traditional music and local news in the various Gaeltacht communities. 	<p>RTÉ News and Current Affairs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RTÉ provides independent, accurate and impartial news and current affairs programming, in both languages, across all services, including radio, television and RTÉ.ie.
<p>RTÉ Network</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RTÉNL - provides a national transmission network, for RTÉ Radio and Television, TG4, TV3 and Today fm. It also rents tower space on its masts to local radio stations and a range of entities involved in broadband, mobile phone networks, the emergency services etc. 	<p>RTÉ Publishing</p> <p>RTÉ Publishing operates three of Ireland's leading media services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RTÉ Guide - the best-selling Irish weekly magazine. • RTÉ Aertel - the leading free-to-air teletext service. • RTÉ.ie - the most popular media website offering a range of free web based Online services. 	<p>RTÉ Performing Groups</p> <p>RTÉ is a major contributor to the arts in Ireland, and operates five performing groups:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RTÉ National Symphony Orchestra. • RTÉ Concert Orchestra. • RTÉ Vanburgh Quartet. • RTÉ Philharmonic Choir. • RTÉ Cór na nÓg.

Extract from: RTÉ Vision, Mission, and Values.

A Strategic Framework.



RTÉ's Vision is to grow the trust of the people of Ireland as it informs, inspires, reflects and enriches their lives. RTÉ's Mission is to nurture and reflect the cultural and regional diversity of all the people of Ireland, Provide distinctive programming and services of the highest quality and ambition, with the emphasis on home production, Inform the Irish public by delivering the best comprehensive independent news service possible, Enable national participation in all major events. RTÉ's Values are to operate in the public interest, providing news and current affairs that is fair and impartial, accurate and challenging, Connect with our audiences by understanding and satisfying their needs, Deliver a value for money service, Be creative in everything we do, Be honest and transparent in all of our activities, Take personal responsibility for pursuing the organisation's goals, Be responsible to our staff and consider everyone as an individual, Optimise the performance of each person, department, division and the organisation by working together, Respect each other and our diversity, Take pride in everything we do, everything we are and everything we create.

APPENDIX 2

Research Questionnaire

Research Questionnaire

Exploration of Strategic Human Resource Management in RTE:

Does HR Deliver a Strategic Contribution?

Introduction

Good morning / afternoon my name is Niamh Killeen from HR in Performing Groups and I am conducting some in-depth interviews with six senior members of staff for a thesis I am writing. Thank you for agreeing to participate in the research and can I assure you that everything you say is confidential. I will be grouping the responses and no individuals will be revealed in the dissertation. The interview lasts approximately 40 minutes and if there is anything that is not clear just ask me to re-phrase the question. I have an audio recorder that is purely to aid me for transcription purposes – are you happy for us to begin?

Respondent information

1. Can you tell me a little bit about your **career history / path**?
2. Can you tell me a little bit about your **role in RTE**?
3. **How long** have you been with the organisation?
4. What, if any is your **experience** of the **HR unit** in your area?
5. What type of contact, if any do you have with that unit?
6. Does your role require interaction with the HR unit - in what capacity?

Understanding the HR unit in RTE

1. What is HR? What is your **understanding** of HR? Can you elaborate?
2. Describe the **HR function** in RTE Corporate?
3. What is your understanding of how it operates?
4. To what extent are you aware of the **current policies, practices and processes** undertaken by the HR unit?
5. What **changes**, if any, are you aware of in the **HR function** (Corporate or IBD) over the last **5 years**? (Since Transformation)
6. What are the **strengths and weaknesses** of the HR unit (Corporate or IBD)?
7. Does the HR unit **communicate** effectively with the other business divisions?
8. How does it **perform** overall **versus** other divisions?

9. Can you reflect and comment on the **effectiveness** and **achievements** of the HR unit as you have experienced it over the past five years.
10. What **obstacles** would you see as blocking the HR unit from being truly effective and reaching its fullest potential?

HR and the current economic environment

1. What are the **current challenges** facing the HR unit?
2. Can you describe the **business pressures** which RTE is currently facing?
3. How is the **economic downturn impacting** on RTE?
4. How is the organisation **dealing** with the current **economic environment**?
5. What **internal changes** have you **noticed** due to the **economic climate**?
6. How is this **impacting** on the HR unit?
7. How is the HR unit **leading** in the **development** of **curative** and **remedial actions** in the current climate?

HR and a strategic contribution

1. In your opinion can you **define** what **strategic human resources management** is?
2. What does this **involve**?
3. Does the HR unit succeed in **deliver a strategic contribution** to the organisation as a whole? (If not why not?)
4. How can the HR unit **add value** in RTE?
5. Is the HR unit **aligned, to contribute** to the **long term objectives** of the organisation or is it merely seen as a **service provider** to **internal customers** /line management?
6. How is this **realised and measured**?
7. In what way is **HR connected** to **strategy** – is it via business partnerships?
8. Can the Strategic HR Management enhance **organisations competitive advantage**? If so, how can this be **realised / measured**?
9. Can the Strategic HR Management **add real and measurable economic value**? If so, how can this be realised / measured?
10. What **value added services** do the HR unit **provide**?
11. Who are the **customers of value added HR services**?
12. **Which** of these do you feel is the **most important role** which the HR unit can fulfil?

13. What **improvements** could be made to **enhance** the **role** of the HR unit in RTE in order to add value?

In summary

1. Thinking about the topics we have covered is there anything you would like to **add** regarding the **role and effectiveness** of the HR unit? Anything else?
2. In your opinion **should the HR unit provide a strategic contribution** in RTE and what **steps** should be taken to **achieve this**? Can you **elaborate**?
3. On what basis could the **role of the HR unit be shaped to deliver major improvement** in the **internal and external communication channels** of RTE?
4. **How can this impact** on the **delivery of the strategic intent and message to the various stakeholders**?
5. In your opinion what are the **key challenges facing the HR unit** in the coming months? And what about the **organisation overall**?

Thank you and close. I appreciate you taking the time to complete the interview. Everything you say will remain confidential and I will be grouping the responses for my report so no one individual will be revealed.

APPENDIX 3

Interview Transcripts

Interview Transcripts Research Subject 1 Interview

Text hidden to protect anonymity of the subject will be marked as follows "XX
XX"

NK: *So Subject 1 thank you very much for meeting me, can you tell me a little bit about your career history path and your role in RTE, how long you've been with the organisation*

Ans: "XX

XX"

NK: *So you've had a good mix*

Ans: Yeah

NK: *And what if any is your experience of the HR unit in RTE, sorry in your area, what kind of contact do you have with it*

Ans: It would actually be easier for me to talk about the "XX XX" experience of the last 6 and half years than the present experience

NK: *And that would be better for me*

Ans: Yeah, this is a tiny department and it's not

NK: *Great and that's better for me as well*

Ans: The significant thing about the "XX XX" HR arrangements are that they are now about 7 years old, getting on for 7 years old and they are HR arrangements which reflect the way the organisation was restructured, about 6 years ago we achieved the creation of what are called integrated business divisions, "XX XX" and television etc and in "XX XX" and television and each of these units, lets call it that there is a HR structure which is of course related to, answerable to centralised group HR but has developed over the last 6 to 7 years in response to the needs of the area in which it exists so, that's the case in radio and there is a team there of, a total of 5 people. There is a head of HR in "XX XX" and there are "XX XX" people working with him and they propose policy and administer the HR function if you like for "XX XX"

NK: *Great ok, what is your understanding of HR*

Ans: I mean rather than rattle off some pat definition, I think that what HR exists to do is to find and then to develop the talents that are need, in our case, to provide the public with the best possible services of broadcasting and media and to do that in a way that respects the legal entitlements and the natural dignity of the people who are so recruited and who are so employed and engaged, now that's quite high level but that's I see it

NK: *No that's grand, can you describe the HR function in RTÉ corporate, what's your understanding of how that operates*

Ans: That is to establish the policies and procedures that ought to apply throughout the organisation and to keep an oversight to ensure that those policy and procedures do apply and that people behave consistent with them, so you don't for instance have a set of values about how people are to be remunerated in television which are different from those in "XX XX" or the news room

NK: *And to what extent are you aware of the current policies, practices and processes undertaken by the HR Unit*

Ans: I suppose I'd have to claim to be very familiar with them naturally, just to sort of name things that have happened in the medium term past, I'd point to things like the establishment of a staff survey every 2 years with analysis and feedback. I'd say that there has been a lot more emphasis on internal communications. I'd say that staff induction and training and has been professionalised, sharpened up, the standards of that have improved. I'd say that there has been, most recently there has been an attempt to resuscitate the partnership movement but that's been sort of overtaken by some IR issues concerning pensions and right now, this question of salary reductions in the present climate. There has been the adoption of a PDS system for manager with a centralised policy on remuneration based on PDS, those are some of the headlines

NK: *Can you talk about the changes with the business-divisions having their own HR units, so what changes are you aware of in the HR function, corporate or IBD over the last 6 years or since the transformation*

Ans: Well I think that there has been at a very, very basic level, we now know how many people are engaged by RTÉ and in what categories of relationship, we know that definitively now in a way that we did not know in the past, you got different numbers depending where you went to ask the question, that is no longer the case. I think that in the IBD's, certainly my experience in "XX XX" is that there was a very good knowledge of the people working there, of the difficulties they faced, whether they were professional and common to a team of workers or whether they were personal to do with health issues or family concerns or the stage of life that people were at, there is a very, very fine detail and high quality of information and I think, I mean I would have to pay tribute to the people who work in HR in "XX XX", I think they're very, very good people and I think that they give an awful lot of themselves and I think it is true of people like "XX

XX" and so on that they have endless time for people and there is a toll that goes with that but they are very good at the people side of the business.

NK: *What are the strengths, you named some there, and the weaknesses of the HR unit again corporate or IBD whichever you wish or both*

Ans: I think that there is this, an awful lot depends on the quality of the individuals who are in place in different parts of the organisation and I think that's true not just in HR but it would be true in many aspects of our work whether it's programme making or the financial function but to mention a couple of things that I would perceive as things that we could be doing with and this isn't to be critical or but I mean these would be sort of suggestions for consideration. I think that we as an organisation need to be much more aware of what it is we expect of people, very often people who are good at functions are promoted to management positions and responsibility to lead groups, historically we have not given them what they need to do that, even at the basic level, I'm not aware that we have a system for sitting down with people on their appointment as managers and doing what the jargon today would call an audit of their skills. We don't sit down and say to people, have you ever chaired a meeting, what do you think a meeting is for, do you imagine that there are different kinds of meetings, that you might have different objectives, that some meetings might be validly discursive where other meetings are about saying, we need to do this, we need to have this done by Friday and Joe Bloggs is responsible and he'll answer back next week as to where we are on it, have you ever opened an excel spreadsheet and what do you mean when you talk about something being strategic, there is a lot of jargon that people pick up and they use and you wonder, you really wonder sometimes. So I think if we had some structured way of addressing that kind of need, I think people would be better at what we're asking them to do. That's one example that I could give. Another example I could give is speaking as someone who was once, very recently responsible for a total of "XX XX" people, no one ever came to me off their own initiative and said, what do you think HR should be doing for you or with you and that might sound like a very, very severe criticism and taken out of context it would be a severe criticism but you mean other things were happening, other policies were being developed and other forms of initiatives about communication or developing E-training that people would self administer, all of these things were happening but I'm talking about something which is a bit more reflective, where somebody actually said to you what are the things that you find difficult about this because managing "XX XX" people ain't easy, it's not, it takes a lot out of you

NK: *And especially the artistic temperament in there*

Ans: Yeah

NK: *That's a fair point. Does the HR unit communicate effectively with other business divisions*

Ans: A lot of it depends on the way that the HR manager in each division relates to group HR. I mean I always felt that and judged that "XX XX" was able to tell me what was going on, to anticipate things, to say to me this is coming down the track or I'm having a difficulty with this or we're having a disagreement with the centre about that but we'll work through it and this is how we propose to work through it but if it hadn't been "XX XX", if it

was somebody less able, less competent, less socially skilled, it could have been a different story

NK: *Can you reflect and comment on the effectiveness and achievements of the HR unit as you've experienced it over the past 5 years*

Ans: Well I'll give you a single example, we've had a lot of organisational change in 5 years, the last 5 years-until 8 months ago they were apparently prosperous years and there was a good flow of money and all the rest of it but we have had very, very successful management of industrial relations. We've had a tradition and even in this current difficulty where we're looking for salary cuts, I think that the quality of conversation with the TUG, the representative groups has been good, I don't think it has been as good with the managers and that kind of takes me back to my point about our historic shortcoming in skilling up people when they become managers. At one level I wonder why the managers have a representative body at all, at another level I know why but there is a bit of a conundrum in there, you know and people's ability is sort of to be on one side of the line when it suits them and when it doesn't suit them to step across to another side, that's a little bit strange, but by and large our industrial relations in this place are very good and I think that's a tremendous success.

NK: *The IRT has been very successful isn't it as well*

Ans: Yeah

NK: *What obstacles would you see as blocking the HR unit from being truly effective and reaching the full potential or it's full potential*

Ans: That's harder for me to say because my recent experience has been of a lot of satisfaction with the HR services which were available to me as a divisional head but I suppose taking initiatives about identifying what skills people need and providing the training, taking the initiatives about going to divisional heads, who are often people, let's be frank, who wouldn't necessarily welcome somebody coming and saying you know what do you think your shortcomings are in managing people, you'd have to put the question in a different way but it does take some resource to do things like that and it does take people, you can only do that if the people who are going to do that sort of work are respected and command respect.

NK: *It's tricky*

Ans: It's tricky and again I think you have to invest in the calibre of people who can do that

NK: *And believe they can*

Ans: And also who can talk the language of the business in general because like a lot of disciplines HR has developed its own language, vocabulary, jargon in more recent years and sometimes you can be sitting listening to this stuff and you could be saying, ah come on

NK: *What are you really saying*

Ans: Yeah or don't give me that guff. A classic example of it would be if as in an area like "XX XX", 74%, yeah I think it's 74% of your costs are hard

fixed costs which are to do with engagement with people, if you're going to reduce your costs or increase your discretion over your costs in "XX XX", you've got to do something about that, getting that 74% reduced and you know if you're running a "XX XX" business you tend to look at HR and say what are you going to do about that, it don't need a whole lot of stuff about psychology

NK: Moving onto HR in the current economic climate, can you talk a bit about the current challenges facing the business and specifically the HR unit.

Ans: The challenges there is 3, money, money, money, that's the problem at the moment, beyond that is a question is if the money, money, money doesn't get sorted out and if it does, what's the best shape that this organisation should adopt, how do you re-design it, how would be restructured. If you restructure you'd be looking at addressing your cost base, in the present climate anyway you have to look at your cost base so you come to this question of what can you afford to be doing and inescapably when you go into that territory there are questions like severance packages, the permanency or impermanency with which people are related to the organisation, the whole or part time nature of their relationships, the seasonal or non-seasonal nature of their relationships, this is a whole area that I would put top of the list of challenges

NK: How is the organisation dealing with the current economic environment and what internal changes have you noticed due to the economic climate

Ans: The organisation has identified it needs 70 million in cost savings, it has sought to secure of the 48 million that it still needs, less than a quarter, a little bit more than 20% of that from personnel related costs, these are the sort of things the organisation is doing, it's seeking to negotiate those savings. The fear would be that it's taking a lot of time, that it takes a lot of time to do that and that we might just run out of rope. Another view would have it that this whole thing could become so fractious or could quickly fall off the cliff and you would be into bad industrial relations and even if you had something like a short, sharp strike, any of us who has experienced these things in the past know how long it takes to rebuild. Like the last major strike was 1992 and it was 1997, '98 that we started to work on partnership and that was 5 years on. We had set up the IRT in the meantime which was keeping us out of trouble very successfully but beyond that it took a long, long and when we got down to it the building of trust, I was very involved in that and it was hard, hard work, it took a lot of time so you don't want to go there

NK: It's a bitter draw isn't it, no one wins ever. How is the HR unit leading you with development in curative and remedial actions in the current climate

Ans: Well I think, it seems to me, from what I'm hearing that there is good engagement and that HR is central to that. So far so good is what I'd say about that

NK: Ok. HR and the strategic contribution, in your opinion what is strategic human resource management as opposed to the general HR we've been talking about

Ans: I think when you talk about strategic you have to be talking about what it is that the organisation exists for and how you can help to achieve what it exists

for. I would have thought that if you're going to talk about strategic things, you're talking about HR having an understanding and working on the basis of an understanding, a very profound understanding of what the core business of the organisation is and that's why I think it's a good thing that the HR units are in the IBD's because people who are working in HR in "XX XX" know the kind of people that they're dealing with, that's vital and they also sit at the meetings where the priorities and objectives for "XX XX" are set, I think that's really critical. I think that there's often today, I suppose it comes out of the kind of market dominance which had infected thinking for a couple of decades now that many things are measurable or quantifiable in ways that I think that they aren't. You know I think that very effective HR behaviour has a feel, has a feel for how things are, a sense of how things are, it's not just about, it's very important to know that you employ "XX XX" people this month and that's a full time equivalent of "XX XX" and that's 8 below budget or 6 over or whatever it is, it's very important to know those things but it's also important to have a sense of who these people are and to the extent that people have a collective mentality or a group instinct or a herd instinct that you know what those forces are. So I think that HR should be very, very closely engaged but it should also very usefully stand back and sort of say well, you know there's a dynamic here that's not working, it's counterproductive, it should do those things. Look to be very concrete about it, I've given people jobs and 2 or 3 months later "XX XX" has come into me and saying, it's not working, he doesn't listen or he's good at this but he's not good at that and then you end up working with HR to fix that. Now I would never expect HR to sit at an interview board and say you're making a catastrophically bad decision, I can see this in 6, I don't expect people to have crystal balls but when there is a problem that's where you go to get it fixed and if you could somehow move the emphasis away from fixing the problems to cutting them off

NK: *Does the HR unit succeed in delivering a strategic contribution to the organisation as a whole*

Ans: I think it does but how do you evaluate that, how do you come to that

NK: *You hit on some of this, but how can the HR add value, actually add some value and is it inline to contribute to long term objectives or is it seen nearly as a service provider to the line managers or internal customers*

Ans: It's not some kind of second fiddle, it's not some kind of ancillary, it's not some kind of thing that you have just because there's employment law. What's the core skill, the core resource that we have here is people's, for want of a better word, creativity and I'm not going to say the management of those people but the conducting of relationships between and with those people is absolutely essential to their giving of their best and that's why you need wise people, talented people in HR because a lot of us simply just don't communicate well or we, you know we get possessed of a notion and we decide that it's important but we don't actually convey that other people or secure their assent to the things that we believe in so this whole thing of identifying what's important and getting as many people as possible to believe in the same things is a critical role

NK: *So if it's aligned and it's contributing, how do we measure it*
Ans: Well I suppose you can have measures which are, I don't know

NK: *It doesn't have to be crude*

Ans: You could look at things like, numbers of days lost through ill health, sickness, you could look at the look at the number of requests for part time working, you could look at the levels of involvement in team meetings or local partnership activities or whatever, you would look at all these things. Measurables, the thing with people measurables are very difficult but they can only be at that sort of level, where as they say you compare yourself, you benchmark yourself against other organisations or bodies that are in comparable fields of activity and you look at things like number of sick leave days taken and all these sort of things, that type of thing but I think it's also very important as part of the quality that the service gives that you would measure such things such as numbers of days training or types of training that are offered to people, I mean so long as the training is substantive and it has good quality itself, those are important indexes of investment in people so you should have such things

NK: *Ok thank you. In what way is HR connected to strategy. Is it via business partnerships or*

Ans: Well most obviously that you would be able to say that if we're to do this kind of work these are the sort of people and skills that we need. I can give you an example from "XX XX" where some years ago we realised that the skills that engineers needed in "XX XX" was essentially skills which are about IT, computers, that you needed people who understood code, protocols and networks and server systems and that you didn't need traditional electrical engineers, you need a small number of such people and therefore you do two things essentially, those who are there in service, you would identify those people who are capable of acquiring these skills or the extent to which they're capable of acquiring these skills and your recruitment or replacement of people as they leave would be dictated by that insight, that you need people with those sort of skills and that was done, I think, rather successfully when "XX XX" was digitised. And it has also changed the complexion of IR

NK: *Can the strategic HR management enhance the organisations competitive advantage and if so, how can this be realised*

Ans: Very difficult to know about the competitive advantage of an organisation like this. I think you have to be very careful when you talk about competitive, it's not, you know you're not talking about Tesco versus Dunnes Stores, you don't have those sort of comparators but yes it can of course, if you recruit the right people and if they are developed properly you will be in a better position to serve your needs, some of the needs that you need to serve are probably best done, you know as they say outsourcing or contracting skills from other specialists outside the organisation but the calibre of people and their commitment should, the high calibre and high commitment should mean that the public would get a better service

NK: *Can the strategic HR management add real economic value*

Ans: Certainly it can, I mean if you, for example in the area of industrial relations, if you can promulgate a well founded sense of the quality of employment that exists in a place like this, I mean if you can manage people's expectations for the size of the pay packet by inviting them to, persuading them to reckon in such things as the working environment, the ease of access to the site by public transport, the provision of childcare services onsite, educational opportunities, a whole range of considerations like that and if that helps you to manage the narrow expectation of the size of the wage packet, yeah that's a very clear example of it

NK: *Who are the customers in your mind of the value added HR services*

Ans: Ultimately it should be the public, it should be the public so if the HR activity is correctly aligned with the objectives of the organisation, the value should be going to the public. There are many cultures in an organisation like this, if a member of the public contacts this place with a complaint and gets the head bitten off them, we're not doing things right so if more of us realise who pays our wages and we should behave differently

NK: *You're experience in "XX XX" has been very positive for lots of reasons, people being the most important one obviously, if you were to take more of an overview, what improvements could be made to enhance the role of the HR unit in RTE to add value*

Ans: Well I think it would be in terms of making sure that the department has the resources and the people to take the kind of initiatives that offer support in ways that are based on a through understanding of what the organisation ought to be about and if those people understand the organisation sufficiently well, if they're sufficiently knowledgeable about it they can argue through all the different bailiwicks, which have their own ideas of what the organisation is for. I mean crudely, the newsroom thinks that broadcasting is news, there would probably be people in the finance function who think that the purpose that we're here for is to make sure that this is run to the highest standards of professional financial operation, there are people in "XX XX" who believe that they're the only people in the organisation who should be entitled to licence fee funding because they're the only public service you know, there are people in the orchestras who don't have much of a sense of the organisation at all, they come to work and perform music and their sense of RTE and that has been like that for 30 years, all those things have been true for 30 years. Those are conditions that you have to keep working with, so you need a HR function that can recognise that but it can always talk persuasively to it, you know particularly when the pressure comes on, can persuade those people, saying well hold on a second now there is a bit more to this than

NK: *Nearly there, thanks very much, speaking of communications, on what basis could the role of HR be shaped to deliver major improvement to the internal and external communication channels of RTE*

Ans: I think that we are an organisation which has the apparatus, the paraphernalia, the whole panoply of communications, we have intranets and we have RF feeds and the DG can go and does very well stand up in front of people but the key to communication always seems to me to be local effectiveness and it's about getting to that level where if you or I are managing 8 or 10 people,

we're not dodging them; we're actually able to sit down and say to them here's what's happening this week and we don't say things to people like, I'm only telling you this because they tell me I have to, you know

NK: *In your opinion should the HR unit provide a strategic contribution in RTE and what steps should be taken to achieve this*

Ans: Well the answer to the first part of the question is yes, it should be make a strategic contribution. I think that the way it should be done is through, I mean obviously you can have various reporting relationships and so on, representation on executive boards and things but there are a couple of things that are actually key activities like the development of the strategic plan and it seems to me that that's an area that HR must be centrally involved, must be centrally involved, half the cost of this organisation are tied up in people, ¾ in "XX XX" and more in performing groups probably. So you've got to be there, HR has got to be there in the strategic planning

NK: *Because then it can impact on the delivery on your strategic intent and message to the stakeholders*

Ans: Yeah, I mean at a very fundamental level you could say to people, look you can handle it as an objective but if you don't actually do this, that and the other you're not going to get there

NK: *Last question or second last question, in your opinion what are the key challenges facing the HR unit in the coming months and what about the organisation overall*

Ans: I think that HR's contribution as I said earlier has to be geared to RTE's mission, values and objectives but in this present climate the question of what RTE is becomes more difficult to answer so the biggest challenges is operating with uncertainty, acute uncertainty, I mean there is always, there is a chronic level of uncertainty in an operation like this but I'm talking about acute, really sharp uncertainty in the coming months. Beyond that even if you think about the elections last week, we've now have a situation of political uncertainty where a Government will try to hang on for as long as it can but maybe derailed very quickly in which case the proposed legalisation may not be enacted, you could have a new ideology in power and people might say well we don't want this broadcasting bill, it's, all that could happen

NK: *Uncertainty*

Ans: *Uncertainty*

NK: *Thanks very much, is there anything that you would like to add regarding the role, effectiveness, anything else at all that I haven't included, any observations*

Ans: I don't think so...

Research Subject 2 Interview

Text hidden to protect anonymity of the subject will be marked as follows "XX
XX"

NK: I'm with "XX XX", you know who I am and thanks for agreeing to participate. So I'll start with questions about you first, so if you can tell me a little bit about your career history path and your journey to where you are now I suppose.

Ans: "XX

XX"

NK: *Enjoying every minute of it*

Ans: It's fascinating, absolutely fascinating

NK: *Obviously you've had experience with the HR unit with "XX XX" and in your current role, so roughly what has your experience been, if you had to outline your contact with HR and the units*

Ans: If I take the "XX XX" project first because that was primarily a finance HR, well actually strictly speaking a HR project and so "XX XX" was here at the time, he joined at the same time that I came and then he left after, I don't know, about a year or something and then there was a gap before "XX XX" came in. At that time which was 2003, RTÉ having come through it's transformation, my impression was that it was very much a HR organisation in disarray, that would be the honest truth and that were people had through that transformation process, some of them had been put into HR when they actually didn't have an interest, ability or skills or contribution actually to make. They were sort of perhaps administrative type people, people with administrative skills, forgive me I shouldn't say that but it meant that they didn't know quite what they were at and they were sort of following orders and filling in forms and

NK: *Reacting*

Ans: Yeah, passive and reactive, very much the classical and traditional model and I was amazed about that because I had heard a lot about this transformation project that had happened here in 2002, however, as I say part of the getting back on track was PeopleSoft so that we would at least know how many employees we had and what categories of employment contracts they had and we went through a lot of that with "XX XX" etc. Anyway and then there was the actual change process if you like of putting in technology into what was now a distributed HR system and I have, I'm afraid, I just don't agree with the way the central functions have been distributed into the divisions, I've never agreed with it and I've always argued with my Lord and my master and my other Lords and masters about it because I think that the central functions of finance, HR and IT should be centralised and that it

hasn't worked by putting it into the divisions, instead we have redundancy essentially and people who are just duplicating works. Now I know the old argument which I've heard especially from the central HR people which is they're left doing all the work otherwise but at the moment, I just don't think it's efficient. I see the logic of why it was done but I don't believe it is efficient and I don't believe it's the best structure in any case, I'm going off on a tangent,

NK: *I suppose just for myself, well you've already demonstrated your understanding of what HR is and the functions that exist with it and we've hit corporate there. I suppose the understanding of how it operates or how it should operate or how it does operate*

Ans: Ok, alright yeah the theory I suppose is one thing and the practice is different always and I suppose, obviously I have my own biases, so I'm coming from, I have seen very, very, very good and efficient strategic HRM in the multi-national section, I have seen atrocious HRM in the academic sector and RTÉ is somewhere in between I would say, so in terms of, well I think it's in the overall context of the organisation and it's purpose and it's strategy and what it is seeking to achieve and that as a result of that, once the strategy, the strategy comes first and then the structure and HR is there to fulfil that on behalf of the organisation and it is genuinely really realising it to the people because that is what the organisation is. The old traditional approach which is as you mentioned there passive, reactive, going to a more proactive, innovative, inclusive, forward looking innovative kind of thinking of HRM is crucial to any organisation and you would have thought an organisation like RTÉ, especially as a media communications company should be very much to the fore. Here we just have to remember history for a minute and history here is that apparently and this is my received wisdom and not my own experience, that engineering predominated but programme suffered, programme output is what we're about, programme is kind, content is king and therefore HR just like IT and to a lesser extent finance are seen as necessary evils almost, a support system for that which I believe is again incorrect. There doesn't have to be one or the other, we can have an integrated strategic approach which recognises how important it is to take a strategic view on HR as well as a strategic view on our content and our output

NK: *So there has been big changes. When you came in were the IBD's developed*

Ans: They had been, just recently so there as a lot of settling down or not as the case may be and that was what I felt that there was this redundancy in the organisation

NK: *And we have all the various different HR Marconi sites*

Ans: Yes which was mad to my mind but again I think there is the stated strategy and I mean the whole point really is organisational culture isn't it, I mean it's all very well me to talk about the organisation and the strategy and the structure but the culture actually is crucial and part of the culture here has always been a non-sharing, a keeping to ones self and arguably part of the whole IBD devolvement was in order to get people to work together and for costs to be traced within each division and to know exactly what are the inputs and the outputs, just putting it at a very fundamental level and hence they

wanted to include HR, finance people etc. But that's just too crude as far as I'm concerned and it doesn't have to be like that, you can still track all the costs associated with the production of television for instance, for want of a better example, or radio or the web site or whatever without having all of those individuals located there

NK: *So like strengths and weaknesses in the HR unit, there is strengths maybe to leave it as one body or the IBD's what way would you be*

Ans: Well again I think it goes back to the fact that we can't take it out of context, we can't solve it by itself, we've tried that with technology and I had a lot of experience with that here too where we took technology and we tried to fix it and you can't fix it by itself, similarly you can't fix HR by itself. I think in terms of strengths, I think that if we think about sort of models of HR management, what we have here is a very strong, some might call it old fashioned IR kind of model where people have taken great delight in saying that it's very successful and it works really well and we have the IRT and the Labour Court and blah, blah but I would have thought that that is not as useful now as it would have been perhaps 10 or longer years ago and that for now we need a better approach, a new approach that is genuine and is more inclusive and I don't see that in the current, especially particularly right now the current circumstances in which we find ourselves, which I'm sure we're going to come onto

NK: *Yeah I suppose as we can't take it in isolation. Are you aware of policies, corporate HR polices for the organisational, practices, processes, do you receive information on them*

Ans: Absolutely all the time and through the DG's office "XX
XX"

NK: *At the very outset. What obstacles would you see as blocking the HR unit from being truly effective and reaching it's fullest potential and I know to contextualise within the organisation*

Ans: Yeah but if you look at it within itself, I didn't actually quite answer your question. I mean I think that there is some fantastic strength of experience in terms of the individuals who have been working in this organisation for, I don't know, a long time and often goes unsung, that would be the other thing, so one needs to acknowledge that. The HR unit, again I'll go back to the beginning part which I said, the structure. The fact that when the IBD's were devolved in 2002, that there was no head of HR on the executive board, just as there was no head of IT and this is where I say I've always argued with everybody, there was never anyone on the executive board who agreed with me on this, which is interesting in itself, obviously I'm wrong but well in fairness I did try to convince the DG that we needed somebody from IT. "XX XX" actually did convince him that he should be there for HR but unfortunately that was short lived as he left after 12 months. When the replacement was made it wasn't at that level, equally in terms of IT, there was an attempt in 2004 to get somebody to fill that position but there was no appointment made, so instead we get, heads, we have the group head of HR and then we have the group head of IT and they are reporting to the a member of the executive board, so I just from the start that's wrong. I remember

talking to a manager in television that we won't name who said to me one time, laughing, oh I'm in charge of HR here don't you know and I thought you know absolutely nothing about HR and that just showed me the lack of respect by the programme makers actually and the people who come from that background for people who work in either HR or IT or finance or legal or any other sort of service if you like, corporate service and hence you get here this huge antagonism between the corporate centre and the divisions and the divisions see corporate as always interfering and trying to control or whatever

NK: *And what do they know*

Ans: Yeah they know nothing about

NK: *You hit on somebody else Anne, talking about the IR and we're in a particularly difficult economic climate at the moment; every company is but RTE isn't exempt from it. With IR in mind or what we should be really calling partnership, what are the particular challenges you can see facing the HR unit and with the business pressures that are facing RTE*

Ans: Well partnership is the word, that is the ideal, I think the difficulty is the disconnect between language and action. Like we have on our canteen printed our wonderful vision, which means nothing to people, seriously and I would argue that people don't even realise, the senior people don't realise that other people in the organisation haven't a clue what they're on about when they talk about strategy or the strategic plan or whatever, a list of objectives that we've got to achieve or whatever but there is no personal connection. Like in other organisations, Intel is the one because it's like an army, I can remember within about a week of being in Intel you were passionate about Intel's goals and achievements and how did they, the strings of the culture and for you to take pride in being part of it and I think here because there is sort of a feeling that creative people have to be left to do their own thing, that actually means that it can feel as if we're in a rudderless ship and I think actually what we're seeing that it's a sort of a light touch, you know easing the ship along without wanting people to think they're being managed to a fault but I think the side that we've got to be careful about it that what we don't get then is any collective sense of working together and even within the divisions, the division are, you know they work against each other, even within the divisions, teams as we know programme teams, news teams they work against each other and that's all seen as grand because it helps competitiveness and creativity and innovation but it doesn't work on the organisational level and therefore it falls to HR in a way that it shouldn't to somehow try and become the glue that brings together and they can't without the actual strategic business leaders i.e. the executive board members taking that leadership position. So I think it's a, actually a crisis of leadership I would call it and I have said that before although nobody agrees with me and a lack of a sense of urgency about how important it is and now I think that we're coming to the crunch, just to go back to where you started with the question because I think that laise fair, it will be alright on the night, we believe the best in people and all of that goodwill stuff has come under tremendous pressure and as a result of that people are going to be held to account i.e. the senior people are going to be held to account

NK: *And you know you talk about Intel, you knew after a week that you're part of it, it's such a contradiction when so many people would love a job in RTE and it's a place that's sort after and you say to people you work in RTE and they're engaged immediately, the other people might have been physicists or astronauts, it doesn't matter they'll immediately jump at RTE and go, so we're failing very badly*

Ans: We're failing internally.

NK: *When they come in*

Ans: The perception outside is entirely different to, I think, the reality within

NK: *We don't engage with it, I don't know, we just don't seem to keep it*

Ans: It's like we don't value it, it's like a relationship unless you work at it, it's not going to keep going

NK: *Or it will go nowhere fast*

Ans: Or it will go the wrong direction

NK: *The wrong road. Like how the organisation is dealing with the current economic environment, the internal challenges and how it is impacting on HR, I think there is notices up in the canteen, there is notices on Marconi, so do you maybe want to say something about that about the TUG and MA*

Ans: Yeah I'm probably not being specific enough, I think that HR is doing everything it can, I think the senior management in general, in conjunction with HR are doing everything they possibly can and indeed with the trade union representatives and we can see like from the 3am meetings and all the rest of it that they're working very hard to try to find a solution because nobody realises the danger more I believe than the people who are in the trade union group and they are damned if they do and damned if they don't. They're being castigated by their members on the one hand, they're being sort of whatever, argued with on the other. They're trying to do their best and I think the difficulty here always is trying to keep flexibility. Its when the intransience comes into play and people take positions and they harden, you have no hope under those circumstances and that is the worry now that with this ballot and all I'm hearing is that they're going to say no and then what and trust of course, you know where is trust, it's very damaged under these circumstances and if people don't have trust and respect then they are not prepared, they don't see it as we're all in this together and we're all trying to pull ourselves out of it together, it's the us and them and really when that kind of mindset happens, it's extremely difficult because it has to happen throughout the whole organisation, it's not just HR obviously. HR are there as facilitators essentially in this process and they seem to be doing a very good job, the people that I have come across, so they're doing their best but if they don't have the leadership from the people for the executive level, they can't do any more than that

NK: *They're probably tied in terms of the remedial actions they can take and anything curative they can do, so while you come up with great plans, you really need them coming from the very top table and there is no seat at the top table for HR, there is a quasi maybe*

Ans: So now we have somebody recently who obviously has been catapulted into this process and hopefully brings that kind of strategic HR perspective that will help

NK: *And much needed*

Ans: And much, much needed but that is a huge ask for somebody who is new into an organisation and where they don't actually command all of the people in HR and that is part of the difficulty that they must, in these service organisations of IT, Finance, HR, they must work with the divisional managers and try to get, sort of work through them and with them to mobilise the people in each of those divisions and that is extremely difficult for somebody who is coming in from the outside. Now you can argue they have an edge in that they're new and they're different and they might be listened to as a result and hopefully they are but it's a bit like the famous RTE line Accord Across which I think epitomises everything to do with RTE, you're never in charge of X, you're always across it and you're probably one of the number of people who are across it, which means once the thing doesn't work, you're not held to account and there is a lack of accountability in this organisation which is remarkable

NK: *And it links into leadership because if you don't now who's actually in charge and who is accountable well you're not going to feel a sense of leadership or being lead*

Ans: Yeah that's right

NK: *It sums it all up. You understand strategic and resource management and the language around it. We've talked a bit about it but does the HR unit succeed in delivering the strategic contribution*

Ans: You're very good, you keep coming back to the same thing and I think they can't under the current circumstances

NK: *As a whole*

Ans: They can't because they're not set up to, they're there mainly at the moment to keep the thing running, to fill the forms, to recruit, to hopefully develop training, we used to do that and manage people out in etc, etc. Deal with the many disciplinary actions, bullying etc all that stuff which is really important and I think an awful lot of the time of the HR managers is taken up with that kind of thing and that's all necessary, however, I haven't seen a strategic HR plan for the organisation, there something other than that strategic corporate that I'm sure includes HR but it's nothing, it doesn't inspire you

NK: *It's not like you'd expect or hope for*

Ans: No so there is a lot more that can be done and hopefully with the new person in charge of corporate development, that is a possibility

NK: *Where can it add value in RTE*

Ans: Well if you just think about strategic HR generally and what it can do and not do and think about that through properly managed the great things of innovation, differentiation, competitiveness blah, blah, employee work satisfaction can all be achieved if it's done properly and again I'll take the

Intel example, do you know what I mean and I mean people who don't work in companies like that would quite often just denigrate it and say oh it's stakeholder wealth and it's all about profit, actually it's not it's about pride and achievement and being respected and that's really important and that's crucial I think to how people are in their work and we all have to work and you don't just do it because you want the money, you do it because you're interested and you want to achieve something. So at it's basic level you're talking about innovative remuneration systems, we're talking about what is called employees voice, allowing people to participate and collaborate and be heard. Thinking about all of the obvious stuff like the workflows, the recruitment, the development, the training, all of that kind of thing and even just the work organisation and I mean we've had little attempts at change management here, is all I would call it and I've seen that most particularly in the IT area. There is a huge need for a huge need for a serious change management and instead all we get are exactly it's a little bit of this and a little bit of that and we don't and in the end we saw it with PeopleSoft, we changed the technical solution rather than change our work processes or how we're organised or whatever and there actually comes to something which is probably very controversial and that is the fear that exists in the senior management to do anything that would actually upset people so much that they might stop doing what they're doing and that's the situation we've now engineered ourselves into curiously enough

NK: *Fear of when you open the can of worms.*

Ans: Nobody gets fired, all that kind of stuff

NK: *I think would it be fair to say that some of our IR agreements reflect that*

Ans: I don't know them that well

NK: *But some of them would reflect what you're saying; not all but the older ones would certainly reflect*

Ans: It's a passive

NK: *A first aid job was done*

Ans: But that's where also, that in this comes down the devolution or devolving of leadership and management and in fact we don't have it, we have a hugely hierarchical kind of structure, which is not appropriate either by the way to what we're trying to be doing, but it doesn't encourage any kind of innovation and it doesn't have that accountability that we were talking about earlier, it doesn't encourage that at every level because if you have accountability at every level and again in a multi-national company you know that this is what you have to do and you're going to be held to account for it, not anybody else, you you're the one and we know we might all be across the same project but my contribution to this project is what I'm going to be judged on and that gives fantastic clarity

NK: *And teamwork then because you're going to compete almost to get it done for everybody to*

Ans: Well absolutely because you collaborate also, I mean those were the most collaborative environments for me, those multi-national companies and even though I was a manager, it was irrelevant

NK: *It was about the contribution not the*

Ans: Yeah

NK: *Well it brings us onto the HR unit contributing to long term objectives of the organisation or is it merely seen as a service provider to internal customers and line management*

Ans: Well at the moment it is seen as a service provider but it should be crucial to the long term strategy and the strategic direction of RTÉ

NK: *And if in an ideal world, which we're not in, if you wanted to realise that HR would be a strategic partner for RTÉ, how will we measure it, in really what you've been saying before I think*

Ans: Well the first thing is the Director General did insist that we would have a Managing Director of Corporate Development, he has known for sometime the need for that and he put that in place, he tried with technology again as you know but it didn't work so therefore there is the realisation of how important it is and I presume it's shared by the executive board and the Authority. So now it's up to the rest of the organisation to help that along as well which goes back to leadership at the top. So you know therefore, hopefully, in this new regime we will have the opportunity to do the things that we talked about, the remuneration, the work systems, the work flows, the organisation generally and trying to become a genuinely open kind of organisation where people are valued

NK: *So then what gets done can get measured as opposed to sometimes we're thinking about the metrics before we should be actually doing so we can say performance management*

Ans: Yeah there is a tick box, a mentality which doesn't help

NK: *So we need to I suppose to the business strategy and be more strategic in how goals are set, how business objectives are laid out, connected in some way*

Ans: Yes, you know as I do the way real strategy should be done which is it's set at the top then it's cascaded and you have operation _____, finance plans which support the realisation of the objectives. I don't see that here despite the yoke, plan because that's too regimented and segmented

NK: *Well you can hide a lot in*

Ans: It doesn't and there is so much in that you lose sight of what's actually important. We want clear statements of, a genuine statement which is actually our people are our greatest assets, hello, I mean it's so obvious, if I didn't have them what would we do and valuing that and how you show that value, it's not just about money it's about all sorts of ways or recognising

NK: *The challenge for say the new member of the executive board to connect, I suppose is to connect with the breath of RTÉ and the breath of what we do*

Ans: That's right yeah from performing groups all the way through to the networks and whatever

NK: *And how can he be helped with that or how can the say the top of RTE in a strategic way help support that person going out because we know he's new, he's time for the culture, what could be put in place, I'm not saying what is*

Ans: And I don't know what they're actually at, that's the other point, assuming that they're at something, if we were newly appointed, what would we want. We would want to create our own strategy wouldn't we based on the general strategic overview and it's not enough to sort of say, we'll try not to lose 68 million but that's rather important but having said that, in that new role you would be looking at well what are we at and how is this relevant to strategic HR and I presume that is what is happening and at the moment he is just taken up with current problems but if you were then you would be, you would be putting together teams of people, looking at various things, like I was writing these down as I was thinking about this just before you came in and thinking about what are the important things, the culture, the trust, the flexibility, thinking about innovative kinds of ways, looking at the people who are involved in HR, thinking about the structure, is it the best at the moment or not, I mean I know that the Director General expects the new Corporate Development person to come up with proposals for strategic direction, for strategy, for structure, for organisational change etc, etc, so I presume that that is in his 6 months to a year plan. I think the difficulty is he can't do it by himself so that what we need that once he comes up with his plan that that is taken by all of the people at the executive and that it's not just his problem, it's their problem because part of difficulty is the segmented into the divisions means that I'm ok over here in television, I'm grand and you're struggling there in radio and good luck to you, I'm still ok and that hasn't worked because you don't see the cohesiveness that should be there even despite the Director General's attempts to bring it together. Because they are safe in their own little turrets they just don't do it.

NK: *And it's difficult in say the current economic, an observation while, the current economic climate, why do we have two orchestras*

Ans: That's probably legislation, that sorts that

NK: *Yeah but you know that parts of the organisation will turn on other parts*

Ans: They do that's right

NK: *Instead of supporting and saying well we gave back 3 million and that's why you can continue to do this programme or whatever it is*

Ans: No instead you get the all defending their own little patch

NK: *That comes back to the leadership and the overview*

Ans: It does and the lack of feeling that we are all RTE, we don't get that feeling at all

NK: *And that is a change probably*

Ans: Is it

NK: *Yeah I think it is a bit of a change from years and years ago but that's only my personal because I'm here since 1987*

Ans: But that's valuable because when I arrived in 2003 I didn't see, it was I'm television and I'm radio or I'm whatever

NK: *We probably just a bit more unsure of who we were and what we were but it was more of a mix, but it was certainly more lead by engineers and maybe that wasn't the best thing for the organisation but who are we to say Anne*

Ans: Well the question is what's needed now, regardless of what has been in the past and what's the best we can take from the past into the future and clearly a very well articulated strategic HRM policy is crucial and the commitment that the recommendations will be acted on

NK: *So we've gone through, the value added services, it's limitless what can be added on, I mean the world is your oyster, you could become the new Google or whatever, great international company with good work, life balance etc, etc*

Ans: Nothing to stop us, I mean we haven't really talked about communications, but internal communications are atrocious, I mean that's worth reminding ourselves about and something that the previous incumbent tried to do something about and "XX XX" was somebody who was in charge of it but they left but I think this person clearly is aware that communications are crucial so hopefully again there is a plan and a strategy for that

NK: *It's a great contradiction for an organisation that is supposed to make it's money out communicating with the public. So improvements, I could go on and on with a list, I'm not going to go through all of that Anne, you added communications there and thanks about that. Is there anything else about HR effectiveness, HR unit strategic, anything at all*

Ans: I just have the feeling that morale is very low in the HR unit, that's just in my encounter with individual people and I think that is a terrible crime, I'd go so far as to call it a crime because it's so important and again maybe I'm now falling into the same category, well we've a new person in charge and he has to worry about it but he does have to worry about that because building up, in any division when you take it over as a manager and morale is low, you have a huge challenge there and a huge opportunity to bring people to the promised land essentially which involves a change of programme and that is why I'm assuming that this is going on in that persons mind and they're thinking about how best what changes to make structurally or otherwise to ensure that they will actually get the best out of the individuals who are there, out of their experience, out of their commitment and to make it, well you know God forbade fun, that they actually feel good about it rather than sort of creeping around the door thinking oh do I have to come in here again

NK: *Satisfaction I suppose*

Ans: Yeah

NK: *Pride, back to your pride word*

Ans: Its pride, I think it's about pride and feeling that you can achieve something and not feeling that, putting it negatively but not feeling that you can do

nothing i.e. feeling that you can actually make a difference and that your contribution really counts and I don't feel, we don't feel that throughout the place at the moment

NK: *And that can certainly add huge value to any organisation*

Ans: Yeah

NK: *You won't see it in money but you'll see it in other monies*

Ans: No you'd see it in everything

NK: *We've talked about communications and the key challenges facing the HR unit in the coming months and organisation overall*

Ans: Well they have to be the champion don't they, the HR unit has to be the champion and even if people don't want to listen to it, that it's legacy or role and in many ways how these current discussions go with the unions and with the staff about pay cuts and all of that is going to be a testament one way or another to the effectiveness of the HR unit in RTE but not only then as I said at the start they could be left sort of holding the baby.

NK: *Hopefully it won't be only a time will tell thing and there is some kind of longer term thinking behind, even packages, they come out and you talk about morale, we all could be talking about morale being low and communications poor and not having a massive sense of, some people, about where they are or their worth to the organisation. I think if we have an exit of people who won't be replaced, that's going to get worse*

Ans: That would be atrocious

NK: *There has to be a plan*

Ans: Yes there has to be a plan, plans even

NK: *Plans for the various areas that would be effected and for the employees*

Ans: Like I mean you went through it in 2000 when you had all those redundancies, I went through it in "XX XX", I was there after the major redundancies in "XX XX" but I was still unfortunately at the end of the tenure there I had to make people redundant and the only good thing is that "XX XX" was a very good company and we made it as attractive as possible to people and for the most part they were fine, however it's still psychologically huge and the worst part is the survivors, they don't necessarily feel lucky that they didn't get out, they begin to think Christ I should have taken that package and look at so and so now and he's got his own company or whatever it happened to be and managing that fall out if you like that's the real challenge because then you might have let 10% of your staff go but you still have 90% and you want to try and bring them up and bring them to a point where they actually feel delighted that they're still part of it and that's the real challenge. So I mean, there is just so many different levels of challenge here for RTE and they are crucially related to HR policy

NK: *Ok, thank you very much for your time*

Research Subject 3 Interview

Test hidden to protect anonymity of the subject will be marked as follows "XX
XX"

NK: *Ok, I'm talking to the "XX" in RTE who joined the company in "XX" thanks very much for talking to me. Just going to have a chat, everything you say is confidential and it's for my dissertation in the NCI. So just to start up, can you tell me a bit about your career history part and your role in RTE*

Ans: "XX"

XX"

NK: *Ok I know "XX" what if any is your experience of HR unit in your area*

Ans: *Well in a sense I would have, just in my area because I've made it my business to try and get an impression of the HR in all areas. My impression of the HR would be that it is, it has a large number of people in administration, it has begun to adopt best practice regarding what they call the HR Business Partner Model and what else, I think maybe if you're a bit more specific I can*

NK: *Don't worry I'll come down to that so you have contact obviously with HR and the various IBD's and indeed your overall responsibility, the seat at the top table for HR so your role does require interactions with the HR units, in what capacity*

Ans: *Alright I think that's an important one. I suppose the first thing which I've been asked to do and I have asked is to work alongside the HR director to revisit our strategy going forward into the future. In other words what are the best HR initiatives, best HR plans that would best fit with the business plan going forward. Now there is an issue around that which every business is facing and that is around the current recession or depression whatever way you want to describe it. Is this an interim emergency or is this something that's fundamentally going to change the landscape and so at this point in time we're operating from an interim organisation strategy and so it's making very difficult for us to have a HR strategy based on that because it's so short term but the immediate concern and where our focus is on is to adapt pretty much immediately to the challenges that are being presented by this recession. But working alongside the HR director, going back to your specific question, the key part of my work would be formulating what would be the best strategy to fit the business going forward*

LIBRARY
NATIONAL COLLEGE
DUBLIN
IRELAND

NK: *Great ok, just I need to ask you this because I'm asking everybody the same questions so pardon it in advance. What is HR and what is your understanding of HR*

Ans: What is HR, there is a multitude of different definitions of what HR, it starts of is HR simply reactive, is it simply administrative, operational in the sense of and this is just a different stage approach, that it get things done where you have the numbers that require it, for example large scale recruitment, basic training, large scale administration whether it's around holidays or pay and then you move up another model which would be to help the business to implement it's business plans but it takes its lead ultimately from the business leaders and then finally you have a view that HR is meant to be strategic in the truest sense and that means that not alone does it devise plans to implement strategy, it contributes to the business strategy.

NK: *Describe the HR function in RTÉ corporate*

Ans: As I understand it

NK: *As you understand it, everything is just your own.*

Ans: Alright that you would have a number of administrative functions located in the centre which for example HR administration system called People Soft and then you would have a number of specialists who either fulfil a HR role to the centre itself or they act as points of reference for other HR colleagues who are in charge of a specific division such as television or radio and that in essence it's a delegated, to some extent hands off function in the sense that it doesn't determine policy per say, it actually recommends or gives advice, that would be my impression

NK: *Ok great. To what extent are you aware of current policies, practices and processes undertaken by the HR unit*

Ans: Well I haven't been engaged in any specific policy but what I've picked up from business leaders or business heads and also from HR colleagues in the different businesses, that there is an inconsistency, whether it's around the application of the policy or different policies and that it gives rise to confusion and potential inequity and potential conflict because of the difference in practice between the different divisions

NK: *Ok this question is hard for you but you may wish to comment on it and I'll still ask it*

Ans: Does that answer that question

NK: *Yeah it does it's fine. What changes if any are you aware of in the HR function, corporate or IBD over the last 5 years since transformation*

Ans: Well there was a fundamental one because the business or the organisation, it's not a business, it is a business but it's a public service broadcaster with its own unique corporate structure. It adopted the integrated business division model which basically devolves accountability to several and discount business divisions both commercial and editorial and production and as part of that plan, those divisions had their own HR functions and their own finance functions to support their distinct business/broadcasting plan, for example radio, TV, that was the major change that took place over the last 5 years and in essence it adopted the HR business partner model

NK: *What do you see are the strengths and weaknesses of the HR unit, both corporate and IBD, if you what to look at both:*

Ans: Well you see you can't say what are the strengths, you can look at structure weaknesses, you could look at the structure weaknesses that we haven't actually leveraged economies of scale from the model and that we have duplicated activity going on in the respective businesses, so administration costs money, so ideally what you're trying to do is reduce the cost of administration. You also are trying to ensure that you have people who are respected by the business division leaders and my sense of that is it's mixed, that certain business division leaders highly respect their HR business partners while others would say that they're contribution is mainly administrative. So the challenge going forward would be 1, where you have a group that you identify what is seen to be clearly a consultancy resource, that is recognised to be an expert or to provide high added value. 2 that you have HR business partners in the business that are respected and ideally or at the business division board meetings and 3 that you drive out cost by, where possible, by creating shared services that reduce the cost of administration. So what you're attempting to do is provide localised business division support to a very high standard and centralise your services both with regard to consultancy services and administration that are cost effective but also to a very high standard, does that make sense

NK: *Yeah, it's clear. Does the HR unit communicate effectively with the other business divisions*

Ans: I don't know I'm aware that there is a monthly meeting and I'm only in the organisation a short time so I don't know whether that works or not

NK: *So the next question would be how does it perform overall versus other divisions*

Ans: Again if you were asking me how the HR and I've had a lot, I've had an opportunity to meet Managing Directors of the various divisions and to be very honest, HR within the business divisions bar one in particular, HR is highly valued

NK: *Can you reflect and comment on the effectiveness and achievements of the HR unit as you've experienced over the last 5 years*

Ans: Well I "XX XX" I can say is if you would look at the current crisis that's facing the organisation and if you compare RTE's response to other similar type organisations, ether semi-state or private, you know despite the perception of RTE as being fat and happy and closeted from external business realities and harsh realities, that RTE was the first company, one of the first, private or semi-state to bring in a pay pause and it is the first semi-state organisation to ballot its staff around pay cuts, so I have a very clear impression that it's an organisation that is responsive and does actually tackle very hard issues and because costs, 50% of the costs of the business are people costs, it does actually mean that HR plays a very important role to ensure that the business adapts to whatever business environment exists and I believe it is doing that.

NK: *What obstacles would you see as blocking the HR unit from being truly effective and reaching it's fullest potential*

Ans: I think it's own vision and ambition and confidence, I think, I have a great belief that nothing stops you only your belief that it isn't possible, so that's what I would think

NK: *I just have a few questions on HR in the current economic climate, I know we've hit on it in a few parts, so the current challenges facing the HR unit*

Ans: I think like all support functions where you suddenly find that there is a collapse in commercial revenue in the order of 40% plus, all support costs, all administrative costs are actually going to be reduced and the issue therefore is to indentify how that's going to be done and to prioritise what we see as those elements that are operationally critical and strategically critical and to ensure that we protect those areas as we intend to work on much reduced budgets.

NK: *Can you describe the business pressures which RTE is specifically facing*

Ans: It's a very clear on, it's like ever household in the country but it's very marked for us because so much of our revenue is consumer dependant and based on consumer confidence, we have seen a collapse in revenue of the order of 40% and because we're not for profit and all of our revenue goes back into producing programmes that have a very broad public service remit, it means that we're and because we can not build up significant reserves, we're inevitably faced with s short term challenge to reduce overall expenditure in every area including labour personnel and that is our immediate business challenge

NK: *And it's a big impact on the organisation*

Ans: Massive impact

NK: *So any other economic, the downturn, what other impacts is it having on the business.*

Ans: Well the impact it will have is, it's going to have an impact in terms of the range of services that we provide, it will have an impact in terms of the home produced programmes. Now I think it's important for us to say, our priority will very much be to maintain the quality and standards that we have achieved over the last number of years, however, the finance that will be available is going to be smaller and therefore we will have to make certain choices, it's not possible for us to maintain the same level of home produced programmes with the existing budget. That doesn't mean that we won't be able to do a good job, it depends on how you look at the last couple of years, they were a golden era, it doesn't mean that we can not continue to do a very good job based on the existing resources but it does mean that we will have to cut our cloth to measure

NK: *Ok and as you say you're not very long here but this definitely is a question for you, how the organisation is dealing with the current economic environment because you're tasked with leading that*

Ans: Yeah how we're doing it, basically is we're saying that, there is expenditure that is categorised as either as fixed or variable and while accountants may look upon labour as variable, in reality in most organisations it's actually fixed because it's not something that you can turn off over night. We're focussing on variable expenditure with 2 key priorities. 1 is to protect the quality of our output because we're owned by Irish national and 2 is to protect employment and they're our guiding principles. We have made significant headway in terms of reducing reducing variable expenditure by the order of 27 million and we're not attempting through our partnership process with the trade union group to reduce labour expenditure by at least 10 million and we won't know the result on that. Now if that fails that means that we're not in a position to protect employment and it will mean that we will have to have some form of redundancy programme.

NK: *So how is this impacting specifically on the HR unit*

Ans: Well because the HR unit is engaged in a lot of the work with the trade union group, they're engaged with staff and managers through elaborate and comprehensive communication programmes. By their very nature, those processes are two way and at the moment it's quite intensive and the HR Director and his team along with the business partners are leading that change programme

NK: *So HR unit leading in development of curative and remedial actions in the current climate. Can you just bullet point again for me what exactly*

Ans: What are they

NK: *Yeah*

Ans: One is to ensure that we have open and two way communications and we've had probably one of the most elaborate, comprehensive communication programmes in the history of the organisation, two is to have clearly defined substantive changes implemented relating to pay and work practices and negotiations have been concluded and are now being balloted upon, both with

regard to work practise change and also with regard to reductions in salary. So they're the specifics regarding the remedial and curative

NK: *Thank you, just moving onto another heading I have is HR and the strategic contribution it can make, so in your opinion can you define what strategic Human Resources Management is, I know you did earlier but just redefine it for me please*

Ans: Yeah Strategic Human Resource Management is do people policies without making it sound too sophisticated but are your people practices making a difference to the business, are they making it more competitive or are they helping the business to make more money or in the case of a public service broadcaster, are they helping you to increase audience loyalty or to ensure that you're staying relevant to your audience

NK: *So what does this involve*

Ans: Well for RTÉ what it involves is that HR practices are informed by external research and we've done a significant amount of research in terms of audience, based on segments, like for example under 15, 15 to under 30's and so on. Now what we have to do then is based on competitive pressures i.e. Sky, based on the consumers viewing practices, whether it's through internet or their loyalty to alternative channels for example, E4 for say the younger generation, we have to say well what work practice policies ensures us a relevance when we know that the younger generation are very much tuned into internet access. While the next generation are very much tuned into a particular brand of television and how can a broad based public service broadcaster like RTÉ remain relevant in what's become a quite segmented media market and we have to do that based on a very sort of clinical analysis of the talent that we have in this organisation, that's actually is that talent capable of meeting that audience need and we have changed fundamentally over the last 5 years and if you go and look at our research and look at whether it's radio or television or in fact against our digital competitors, RTÉ's loyalty and audience percentage has increased, so in order words our customer loyalty and share of the market has actually increased, were it was in steady decline for many years, over the last 5 years in particular we have been able to turn that around versus other public service broadcasters such as BBC whose resources are greater then ours. Our performance and share of market is significantly higher but that doesn't mean that we don't continue to have challenges

NK: *And many of them. Does the HR unit succeed in delivering a strategic contribution to the organisation as a whole and if not*

Ans: No say if I was just talking to the HR Director, we would say no, we don't have a strategy, there is no defined HR

NK: *And why would that be*

Ans: Well one view was that the business leadership either didn't want it or didn't understand why they needed it

NK: *Alright, do they understand it now*

Ans: Well I think at the moment, I don't know whether they need it, they definitely understand the need for, they understand the importance of managing people, a strategy is not simply about managing a crisis, it's actually having a plan for a 2 to 3 year period and we haven't tested that yet

NK: *Time will tell*

Ans: Yeah

NK: *How can the HR unit add value in RTE*

Ans: I think this has been well described through research and I think it's a Dave Ulrich model and the Dave Ulrich model basically says that you should copy models of efficiency and bring it into the HR department. So for example, if you were a call centre or if you were an insurance company, you would ensure that your administration is processed as efficiently as possible and the same challenge must go to HR and then you have to define, operational efficiency has a value, it can't be demined, there is certain operational tasks that have a very important to an organisation. Such as high quality recruitment, such as high quality technical training, however, in addition it's important that there is a strategic contribution. Now my view sometimes people over emphasis the strategic which is hugely important but unless the strategic is coupled with the ability to implement, it's actually a nonsense and too many people talk about, I'll give you an example, no restaurant in the country would survive unless it was about to create menus and a great experience and also be able to produce good food every day. My own view is that too many HR Directors and too many HR programmes and master programmes talk about strategy and they underestimate the importance of effective and high standard implementation which go hand in hand with any good strategy

NK: *That's a good point. Is the HR aligned to contribute to the long term objective of the organisation or is it merely seen as a service provider to internal customers/line management*

Ans: I think it's seen primarily as a service provided at this point in time

NK: *And to contribute, how can this be realised or measured*

Ans: You see I think in certain areas its happening because the HR business partner is actually seen to bring value and I don't think you can impose it, if a person has the capability and confidence, they're actually going to be given more say, that's what I see, the better HR business partners in RTE are actually hugely involved in the running of their specific business areas

NK: *In what way is HR connected to strategy, is it via business partnership*

Ans: Well that is the model, it is a business partnership model

NK: *So that's how it's connected here. Can the strategic HR management enhance organisations competitive advantage and if so how can this be realised*

Ans: I think it only can but it's really about how good, first of all the strategy has to be well thought through and the strategy is about supporting the business and also it's about contributing to the formulation of the strategy and that depends very much on the quality of the strategy in the first place. If we assume that that is well thought through and is a good plan then HR's contribution, at the

next level, is about implementing that to a very high standard. Which means attention to details, which means a high level of professionalism and which calls for consistency and I think if you get that you're significantly adding value to the business, particularly in a business where 50% of the costs are people costs

NK: *And for a competitive advantage*

Ans: I would say that if you get that high level of consistency and implementation to a very high standard, that has to give you an advantage over your competitors because they're not doing that

NK: *What value added services do the HR unit provide in your opinion obviously*

Ans: First of all you can an idealised view of this or you can have a very practical view of this and if you never had HR or never had the named personnel, once you reach a certain size of an organisation, you need people to specialise, simply around getting things done more efficiently. So you would need a section to pay people, you would need a section to hire people, you need a section to train people and we happen to call that area HR or Personnel, so at one level we contribute to the organisation by doing those activities and it's not right to see those activities as not important because you'd have to do them anyway, does that make sense. So a lot of HR people beat themselves up about these thing but it's a bit like you must your house, you have to go out and do the shopping and if you were talking about what's in the plan for my household and it neglected these very basic tasks you wouldn't really have a plan, you'd be dead. So these things are very important and in terms of adding value, I think the area pretty much and again it's to be careful without creating specialised groups. There's 2 ways, I think performance management is key, I think talent development is key and the other area is flexibility, is workforce flexibility, either in terms of the actual flexibility within the organisation around work practices or the flexibility to bring in people to the organisation that meets a particular need at a particular time and at the same time to terminate those contracts, not in a clinical way or a harsh way and if you look at the sort of work that we're involved in, which is creativity, it is essential that we have a high level of workforce flexibility. I also think it's important if you look at the organisation, that we need a certain culture that supports a very broad base because it's not like we're making a standard product, we're not selling insurance, we're not making a car, the essence of our success is creativity so it is important as an organisation that we create a culture that is supportive of that endeavour. So they're the areas, so to summarise, a culture that is supportive of a creative endeavour, to a high level of workforce flexibility which includes internal work practice flexibility, performance management to ensure that we get the maximum value for our license fee and for the resources and talent development. But talent not just in a select few or an Elite view but talent development focussed on developing the very best talent, whether it's technical talent to performing talent and they are very important, clearly if you got all of that right you'd be adding significant value to RTE, wouldn't you

NK: *Who are the customers of value added HR services*

Ans: Who are the customers, I think its quite dangerous if you begin to indentify your customers just internally because that can be an extraordinarily narrow perspective. I think that every area ultimately has to see it's customer as somebody external and it's not about making people happy in RTE. The role of HR is not to keep people in RTE, the role of HR in RTE is to ensure that RTE stays relevant to it's audience and that a times can mean challenging employees or challenging managers to do things definitely so it's very important that the HR leadership is more tuned in to what's required for the audience than what is required for it's employees or for it's managers. They don't always have to be mutually exclusive but there is a priority and the audience should come first

NK: *So of the value add, which do you think of these is the most important role which the HR unit can fulfil*

Ans: The value added activities

NK: *If you had to grade them*

Ans: Well I've identified several but I would say the value added activities, I would say performance management is probably the most important, workforce flexibility I think would follow, followed by talent development and while culture is hugely important, it is very difficult and it's really over the longer term that you mould the culture, so based on timing and what's possible, I would prioritise performance

NK: *And what improvements could be made to enhance the role of the HR unit in RTE in order to add value*

Ans: I think we've done that, we've begun to put in good people into the business divisions. I think then the next task is to try and get greater consistency across and that means policy revision. I think then we need to link into what the business or the organisation has to achieve over the next 2 to 3 years and for us to have, possibly 3, not more than that priorities that HR would focus on to help the organisation achieve that strategy and I'm very confident that that can be done

NK: *Great, so in summary, you'll be glad to hear those 2 words "XX XX", thinking about the topics we've covered is there anything you would like to add regarding the role and effectiveness of the HR unit, is there anything else*

Ans: Yeah I think, like every organisation, once it reaches a certain size, has to organise its work in a certain way, simply because the scale of activities requires it, so if you have to hire 3 or 400 people a year, it means you need a recruitment section and it is important to value what sometimes in this debate is seen as lesser tasks and I don't like that distinction. So for example administration is not a lesser task in my book, recruiting people on time and having high quality recruitment is not a lesser task. The next question is, is that strategic, it isn't strategic in the true definition, however, what strategic is, it's about alignment between the HR plan and the business plan or between in our case the Public Service Broadcasting strategy and do we have an aligned HR strategy to help that plan and my view of that is, if that is well articulated and well defined and is seen to be valid, in other words, the business plan and the HR strategy, again it comes down to something concrete and tangible. It may look great on paper but unless it's actually implemented, it's worthless so what is necessary thereafter is excellence in delivery and project management to ensure that you get excellence in implementation. I think that's how we will ultimately assess the effectiveness of this HR department against higher standards, are we doing all of that

NK: *And in your opinion should the HR unit provide a strategic contribution in RTE and what steps should be taken to achieve this*

Ans: Yes well I've just described it

NK: *Kind of answered that one there. So on what basis could the role of the HR unit be shaped to deliver major improvement to the internal and external communication channels of RTE*

Ans: Alright, where we're fortunate enough and we've started to do that as part of the major change programme around salary adjustments and work practice change but there is lots of other things we can do, now to some extent we're limited by resources. I think the whole area of the internet interactive as opposed to just single communication will be a challenge for us, but that's what we want to embrace and I think having a high value on face to face meetings with the leadership and listening to staff, whether it's town meetings or smaller focus groups and then tracking attitudes on a frequent basis through shorter surveys, through an amalgam of those different techniques/activities, I think we will have a better sense of communication and of attachment and commitment to what we're trying to achieve

NK: *And how can this impact on the delivery of the strategic intent and message to the various stakeholders*

Ans: Because again it's around commitment so if you're going out to people and if you're listening to people and if you're accommodating and changing some of your proposals based on what you're listening to, you're likely to get a high level of ownership and you're also likely to make better decision. In contrast you staying in your office and not going out to listen to anybody, it's easier to make a decision but it's more likely to be the wrong decision

NK: *To consult widely*

Ans: Yeah

NK: *And just in final summary, in your opinion the key challenges, you've mentioned many of them throughout the interview but the key challenges facing the HR unit in the coming months and indeed the organisation overall*

Ans: I think it's really about adapting to a different economic environment is going to be the biggest challenge and I think also because RTÉ has to compete internationally to stay relevant, it's not, our audience has access to probably the best broadcasters in the world and it's island, so we're talking about the BBC, we're talking about ITV and our challenge is to stay relevant in a marketplace where revenue is significantly reducing and if we look at the BBC, theirs isn't, so that's a big challenge

NK: *There are plenty of them, is there nothing else you want to add now*

Ans: No

NK: *Thanks very much for your time.*

Ans: That's fine

Research Subject 4 Interview

Text hidden to protect anonymity of the subject will be marked as follows "XX
XX"

NK: *So I suppose just for the record, can you tell me a little bit "XX XX"
about your career history path and your role in RTÉ at the moment*

Ans: "XX"

XX"

NK: *Great thank you, so you've been around the organisation a bit*

Ans: A bit

NK: *What if any is your experience of the HR unit in RTÉ.*

Ans: Well all of these go back in different vestiges, I mean I can go back as far as
"XX XX" implementation after the review in the middle of the
1980's, if you remember we used to have these periodic carve ups of RTÉ,
"XX XX" had an implementation group and he was it after that
one in the middle of the '80's, that would have been my first direct exposure
to people who were looking at organisational structure and performance, since
then obviously in a variety of roles I've been exposed to HR on the
recruitment side and more latterly in "XX XX" and then when I came
back here looking at organisation structure and performance, as well as the
routine bits of HR which relate to the orderly keeping of personnel records
and administration of all the things that one associates with that

NK: *And your current role, does it require interaction with the HR unit and in
what capacity*

Ans: Well it does, HR hasn't had direct representative on the executive board for
quite a while so I have appointed a group head of HR about 5 years ago and
subsequently when "XX XX:" indicated that she was leaving I decided that
we would need to bring someone into the organisation who could bring some
of the project management skills that she had in abundance but also have
some element of the HR background as well to help us through and even
when this process began, the current crisis wasn't even on the horizon, so
what I've always thought was that we needed to look again at the organisation
structure and performance. We now have someone into whom HR answers,
who has a HR background and as part of his function through strategy and a
variety of other functions will look again at are we best designed to do what it
is we're supposed to

NK: *Ok thank you. We all talk about HR, what's your understanding of HR, what it is*

Ans: The cynical answer is all the shitty bits you don't want to do yourself and in a sense it's that administrative side of employing people. It used to be called personnel and it's part of the problem of being a HR professional is to know that when it functions best, it has to be much, much more than those necessary things and in fact an awful lot of those other necessary things should routinely be the job of ordinary managers rather than being if you like sidelined into a particular area. So it's best when it has a strategic function within an organisation which is constantly trying to set the bar high for itself and to change when necessary. I mean all of these things are theoretical and when you get down to it on a daily basis where there is the grind involved, it's quite hard to do these things but you do need expertise and training available to you that says well really we should be doing this differently or is it not time we thought out, all of that sort of thing

NK: *Keep evolving*

Ans: Yeah

NK: *Can you describe the HR function in RTE corporate*

Ans: Well I mean you know, we devolved the HR functions to the IBD's and there is kind of a dotted line relationship to corporate where some of the other overarching functions like for instance management training, health & safety and general recording keeping are held and some level of effort is made to make sure we have a uniform approach to these issues across the organisation because as you know one of the dangers of setting up Integrated Business Divisions is people solve, quite ingeniously solve their own problems in their own way but not necessarily consistently and that leads to problems

NK: *And to what extent are you aware of current policies, practices and processes undertaken by the HR unit*

Ans: Well I mean routinely, I get reports on all aspects on what goes on in HR, I get reports compiled by "XX XX" that come up to the executive board on various things like, things that would be routine, issues that come up for instance, in recent years, this new EU directive where we have to inform workers of key developments in the organisation, I'd get reports on absenteeism, health and safety, access issues, one of the key initiatives we undertook since "XX XX" came along was the staff opinion survey, which we've done twice, I think it's a valuable tool, now we should be doing it again now but we're pushing it back

NK: *Financial reasons really more than anything else*

Ans: Yeah

NK: *What changes, we kind of touched on some of this XX XX" I know but what changes, if any, are you aware of in the HR function, corporate or IBD over the last 5 years since transformation*

Ans: Well I think there has been quite a few, obviously the fact that things have gone out to the IBD's, well that's 6 years ago now but there have been quite a few. There have been attempts to modernise our relationships, with various degrees of success in different parts of the organisation. I would say that the HR function in certain areas works better than others, that might be to do with the flat nature of the structure in some places as opposed to others and it may also be the fact that in some areas HR gets bogged down in IR quite a bit. That's different, for instance television is bogged down in IR a lot of the time. If you think about change in the last number of years curiously the newsroom has affected the most change with the least bother so the HR function for whatever reason, maybe because it's a flat place anyway, it has worked and tends to work very, very effectively, there is an early warning system in there and things seem to work well, maybe it's because there are so many different areas of specialisation and grades, television is a much more complex and cumbersome place to work. Radio I think has also, even though it has arguably more complex structures than newsroom, for the most part the HR function seems to function very, very, very well, there is good communication and any changes that have happened, for instance in work practices around radio man, all of the things that have flown from digitisation in radio have really worked very effectively and even if you think about what would have been one of the most difficult groups of people in RTE to deal with in radio, sound operators, that's a completely new set of relationships, that's all working very, very positively both because the guys who are in here all the time are very good but they're also open to the fact that there are people who come and go in a way that just wouldn't have been countenanced years ago. So they are quite significant changes

NK: *The strengths and weaknesses of the HR unit, again corporate or IBD; we don't have to be specific, we all have strengths and weaknesses, if you had to, you don't have to pick them*

Ans: God we certainly all do have our weaknesses that's for sure, mine is I've a short fuse at the moment

NK: *I think you're entitled to that at the moment*

Ans: But look different people play to different strengths, I think there is a case to be made that perhaps some of our HR people aren't as vocationally directed as they might have been and trained as well as they might have been for their current roles. The commitment of all the people that I know is terrific, so that's very positive. After that you get into individuals and I don't think it's

NK: *I don't need that anyway. Does the HR unit communicate effectively with other business divisions*

Ans: That's one of the questions I ask myself on a daily basis, I would have said for instance that RTÉ had been doing it's best to communicate effectively with it's workforce generally, very well since this current thing has developed but it's clear to me when I go to these meetings that either what we're saying is impenetrable or the way we're saying it through Marconi is just not reaching people because it's manifestly clear to me now that a lot of the things which I thought I had said have either not been heard or not been understood across the organisation. So I think that we as an organisation and me in particular and the executive board need to re-examine our internal communications and HR is a vital part of that internal communication structure. One of the things that came up through the staff opinion surveys as you know was poor communications and we consciously went out to try and improve that but it seems to me at the moment, again coming from the meetings that the IBD directors have themselves and the ones I've been doing over the past few days, whatever it is we're doing it ain't working.

NK: *It's not getting through*

Ans: No

NK: *How does it perform overall versus other divisions*

Ans: I think well enough, I'm not going to be ecstatic about it because I think what we need is, I think the mark of really healthy place is when the push is from the bottom up rather than the top down. If you're working really well there is people banging down your door with ideas rather than you, so well enough

NK: *Hopefully we'll get there. I know you've hit on a lot of this "XX XX" but can you reflect and comment again on the effectiveness and achievements of the HR unit as you've experienced it since transformation, if you like over the last 5 years*

Ans: Well again it's about individual cases, where individual things have happened and the story is patchy, in some areas we've been obviously more successful than other. Transformation, if you were to look at, if you go back to broadcasting in the '80s and transformation and ponder to yourself still that we have the 13 point roster and that we have people in extraordinary work practices still, you have to say in some areas progress has been criminally slow, in other areas as I've said and it maybe to do with the range of challenges that people have in their jobs that make them more amenable to things and the people who are in the more repetitive areas of work and the less creative bits of work are the most resistant to change because frankly they're bored in their work anyway so it's difficult to get them to see any other way of doing it. That mightn't be a reflection on RTÉ, that might be just the human condition but I think the best thing to say is patchy, sometimes good and sometimes very frustrating

NK: *What obstacles would you see as blocking the HR unit from being truly effective and reaching it's fullest potential*

Ans: Well that extends beyond, that goes back to this whole question, I don't know the answer to but it is about an organisation culture and an organisation having a culture of readiness to change. There is lots of people on an individual basis who on a given day will do anything for you and that's one of the great things about this organisation, across the board, even people who are perceived as being difficult or dog in a manger, they will amaze you by pulling out the stops but it's only on occasions. There isn't an organisational culture that leads everybody into that and I think that HR needs to help RTE in the future to plan to change itself so that that becomes the norm, rather than just, "XX XX" wasn't he great, he rose to the occasion, do you know what I mean

NK: *Absolutely, we're going to have to go into your favourite place now, the current economic climate or environment, so some of this, we've kind of done the past and now where we are now. So the current challenge that is facing the HR unit, how would you kind of bullet point them*

Ans: Well the very significant thing obviously is that the HR function has been charged with a very difficult set of negotiations which were not helped by the fact that they were dragged out and that the longer that this goes on actually the bigger challenge we face is. But I think all the people have applied themselves very well on the HR side and I think the communications are there and the reports I get on how meetings have happened, all that have been really first class. So they are a vital part of plotting our way through this, that's going to become even more pointed in the next couple of weeks when we seek to communicate with each individual in the organisation and depending on the outcome of that communication then we could be into very difficult individual discussions with people or we could be into IR problems because we need to achieve these savings and HR in this regard are the shock troops in the engagement

NK: *And that leads us nicely into the business pressures which RTE is facing now*

Ans: The big pressure for us is the same as the pressure on ever media group which is advertising revenue had collapsed would be an exaggeration but it has fallen in a way that it has never fallen before, in some cases we are 45% behind where we were a year ago, that's not uniform across the board, but clearly this is something, if that were to continue into the long term we would have to be facing a fundamentally different organisation, a fundamentally different proposition, what we're trying to do at the moment is to see if we can sustain as much as we can for as long as we can so that the current offerings that we make will flourish again, if and when the good times roll, that doesn't mean that we as an organisation won't need to change, we will have to and HR is going to be a vital part of how we change.

NK: *So how is the economic downturn impacting specifically then on RTE, so the business pressures are the finance and obviously the income and*

Ans: Well, how is the finance impacting on RTE, what we offer the public sustains our viewership and listenership, if the audience perceive that we don't have something that's relevant for them, they will not watch or listen so our ability to put money into programmes, that normally means employing people, is going to be severely curtailed and the less you offer the public the less likely they are to want to watch you and the less likely you are to get advertising revenue in the future. So you then fall back completely on the public funding and the less people who watch you, the less entitled they will feel you are to the public money as well as to the commercial money. So you have to balance all the legitimate public expectation from an organisation like this and that's not what I'm paying my licence fee for etc, etc, whether that be subtitling, whether it be specialists programming for the deaf, symphony orchestra on a Friday night in the Concert Hall, Radio na Gaeleachtta or mass on a Sunday morning on television, despite the fact that people can get local radio to do it for them, not even licence really but the local, they've got all those local arrangements now. There are levels of expectation which people have from RTE, most of which are entirely appropriate but some of which you have to question. They're all going to be lumped together as things become more and more pressurised and people saw RTE are dumbing down or RTE are, take your pick, anything will go during this period. What we have to do is to keep as much as we can in place so as the proposition of licence fee equals value remains because if it doesn't we're in really big do doo

NK: *So you talked about the talks that HR are doing and whatever so how is the organisation dealing internally with the current economic environment*

Ans: Well we've broken it up into a number of things as you know, we've sought to achieve a number of personnel related operating cost reductions. We've reduced some areas of spend, we've re-examined almost every one of our external contracts for services, in some cases we've done things that were unexpected, we in sourced rather than outsourced to get something more cost effective and we'll continue to examine every single aspect of what we do in order to try and get more cost reductions

NK: *What internal changes have you noticed of late because it is all recent and*

Ans: People, it's interesting a lot of people have got the message and you find in certain areas where discretionary spend would have been, you could have questioned a lot of it, you're less and less required to question it because people already see well if I have an option of saving here, I should save so where they can get something for nothing, they're doing it for nothing

NK: *It's a whole new way of doing business*

Ans: Yeah

NK: *And how is it impacting on the HR unit*

Ans: I don't know, honestly

NK: *Well you've mentioned staff survey*

Ans: Yeah oh sorry in that sense yes but I mean I don't know how it is impacting on the individuals, I don't know do they themselves feel under more pressure at the moment, I imagine it's all evitable that they would but frankly we've been all too busy to ask

NK: *How is the HR unit in the development of curative or remedial actions in the current climate*

Ans: I think it's been good, I mean there have been, for instance around how we might look at things like various options, say after early retirement on short term working, people going on extended leave of absence, things like that. There are ideas like that getting formulated and coming to the fore now.

NK: *Put a shop together and offer some wears*

Ans: Yeah.

NK: *I'm going to go onto just HR and the strategic contribution, so you're nearly there, thank you. In your opinion can you define what strategic Human Resources Management is*

Ans: I think it's back to my first point which is being able to stand back from the organisation and look at its structure and development in the context of what it is its' supposed to do and how it's supposed to do that in a changing world, so you've got both you're own internal performance issues and how you're structured for that but also if you're sufficiently strategic you question your purpose and your direction in the context of a changing world as well, so it's a multi-faceted operation and it's critical in an organisation like this which is very, very public, everything that happens here is played out in public and despite all of the misgivings a lot of the public occasionally have about RTE, it is a member of the family for all of them and they feel extreme about it, either extremely positive or extremely negative but there is nobody who doesn't have opinions about what we do and how we do it. So being in a position to convince the majority of people, as we appear to do, that we're worth watching and listening in that changing world, HR is going to have a valuable role

NK: *Ok does the HR unit succeed in delivering a strategic contribution to the organisation as a whole*

Ans: I think it, it's my intention that it will more than it has done. I think that changing the organisation structure in the future and this isn't, there is no, I don't have an end position in view, what I'm saying is we now have to look at everything again, obviously I have some ideas that I think might be interesting to pursue but what I was is the people who have the specific in that regard to examine these things with a kind of clinical dispassion and then I'll bring that back to the executive board and we'll bring it to the Authority, but that's a process, it's not going to be and we're not going to do it in the context of just the current economic downturn, it has to be about much more than that

NK: *Longer term year. How can the HR, you're sick of those two words now at this stage I know, unit add value in RTE as opposed to just a service, like actually add some value*

Ans: Well I think it's that cultural thing I was talking about, I do think that that's going to be the real key things for us into the future, is the sense, there is a general sense of loyalty to RTÉ in RTÉ, the staff surveys revealed but that cultural thing of feeling that you know what's happening because the communications are good or if something takes you by surprise you don't suddenly see a conspiracy which wasn't there before or the only way to react to bad news is to kick out and see conspiracies. I think HR will contribute to that by helping us devise much, much better constant communication

NK: *And more proactive*

Ans: Yeah

NK: *Is the HR aligned to contributed to the long term objectives of the organisation or is it merely seen as a service provider to the internal customers and line management*

Ans: Well I think it would be fair to say, it has probably had the latter but our intention is to make it far more added value than simply providing a service

NK: *And how will this be realised and measured*

Ans: Well the measurement of it is a good point, I suppose the ultimate measurement of it is continued success. In the shorter term how will it be addressed or how will it be measured, helping us through a very difficult period is one and number two is if and when we get back to staff opinion surveys that some of the key measures around communication are found to be in place and the sense that there is clearness and fairness around the way we do our business is retained. I mean some areas of the organisation, like the area you're in for instance, I don't know if we're ever going to achieve a sense of good communication with the musicians and I don't mean that disparagingly but all they want to know are the dots on the page, the right ones for today's work and have you provided them with the appropriate facilities to do what it is they do, which is play those dots on the page and communication around the big issues about the future of public service broadcasting are frankly not of too much interest to that. That's alright so we can expect that, so you can expect less of a response there to some of the key questions, then you would expect say from producers in radio or television or journalists in the newsroom.

NK: *Needs basis for the musicians*

Ans: Yeah

NK: *In what way is HR connected to strategy, is it via business partnerships*

Ans: Well the way strategy is at the moment located, the way we've articulated strategy is in relationship with our parent department, signed off on by the Authority but what we did over the last number of years, we had a rolling strategy which has had 3 iterations and HR has been a key part of that, it was one of Bride's great strengths was pulling that together and HR were central to that. But now what we have is we've put in someone to manage it as an ongoing process so strategy becomes rather than something out there, it becomes part and parcel of the way each business is managed and what the strategy manager here does is collate all of that, but in the areas where she's working the HR people are all involved in reporting on how things are happening, how they are being implemented. We're going to have to develop a new one now because there would be a new Broadcasting Authority, our new Board will require a new way of expressing ourselves so HR will be part of the formulation of that strategy and part of the constant measurement of its success or otherwise into the future

NK: *Ok thank you, on competitive advantage, can the strategic HR management enhance this organisations competitive advantage and how could it do this and how could it realise it and how would we know we're doing it, how would we measure that as being effective*

Ans: Well that's the point I was making about just to stand back and look at how we're structured. I mean I was listening to Willy O'Reilly yesterday afternoon, Kevin Dawson was on defending RTE on Today FM yesterday afternoon. Willie O'Reilly was having a pop at inherited structures, he was being a little bit disingenuous, you know that RTE somehow or another hasn't changed since it was established in 1961 and it's easy to have a pop at an institution so I think that HR need to help us, not just do the changes that we need to do to keep ourselves having a competitive advantage but let people know that we've changed, so I suppose one of the things, we hide our light under a bushel for instance. Just to go back on the IR front, we haven't had a significant IR issue in this organisation, through very, very difficult times since 1992 because we have an internal mechanism which RTE developed, the IRT which works very well, perhaps we should be going out and saying to people, look we know how to handle difficult situations, we can give you insights because we're a progressive, modern organisation rather than Willie's view that RTE, for the purpose of public consumption, RTE hasn't changed since 1962. So there are those kinds of things of where and indeed it's a point that somebody to me in another context, we need to be out more, talking about our successes as much as anything else and HR I think will be a vital part of that

NK: *We're proud of what we have*

Ans: Yeah

NK: *What value added services, I know some of it is repetitive, do the HR unit provide*

Ans: I'm just trying to think. I mean we've talked about so many different aspects of this. How would I express this. If I'm talking about the people that I have direct contact with, it's around and I'm not sure whether it's value added or

not to tell you the truth, I'm not sure whether it's not actually part and parcel of what we need to do, is to be informed all the time, so the added value at the moment is that I'm getting better information that I have in the past, so added value in the future will be continued improved information about what's going on

NK: *It's a good point. Who are the customers of value added HR services*

Ans: Ultimately the Irish people because if we do our job better then what we offer Irish people will be more attraction to them and the proposition of paying for a public service broadcaster will be more appealing to them

NK: *So that would be the most important that we can reach out to*

Ans: Yeah

NK: *What improvements could be made to enhance the role of the HR unit in RTE to add the value, to go the extra mile*

Ans: Well I think that's one of the things and there is no conclusion to this one, that's one of the things we have to look at again in terms of the internal structure of the organisation. Somebody asked me the other day about, at one of these meetings, about has the numbers in HR proliferated since the IBD structures had been set up and I actually don't think they have, I think we've more or less the same number of people but the logical question now is when you're looking again, no answer to this one just a question but it's a logical question, should we now having achieved certain success, should we now remodel because it's a different time and should HR revert to being a central function, don't know the answer but it's worth asking the question and are there bits of it that would be more effective organised centrally and bits of it which will always specifically be maybe only IR in certain divisions, I don't know, I don't know the answer to it but I think it's worth looking at

NK: *So in summary, you'll be glad to hear those two words, thinking about the topics we've covered, is there anything else that you would like to add regarding the role and effectiveness of the HR unit or anything else*

Ans: Well I suppose one of the key things, it has to say for itself, it has to take on, it has to be slightly messy and it had to tell people that it isn't just about the shitty bits, that it's about other things as well and we're here, we can give you more, we can help your business processes by helping you design them better or think about them more and add to the overall general cultural, I'm using that word in the loosest sense, just our sense of ourselves as a group of people, make that more coherent and hopefully cohesive for the future.

NK: *And in your opinion should the HR unit provide a strategic contribution and what steps it could take to achieve this*

Ans: Absolutely as I've said and the changes that we've made at the top of the organisation reflect the strategic contribution that I think HR would make to RTE it in the future

NK: *And an area you hit on ahead of me "XX XX", communication is vital so on what basis could the role of HR be shaped to deliver major*

improvement, I think, to internal and external communication channels in RTE

Ans: Our communications and our HR functions are now under a new appointment and I think you're already seeing that both internally and externally, we're trying to communicate in a more consistent way. So for instance even in the external thing where people are saying erroneous things about RTE, they're being countered, whether it's letters in the paper or appearance on Today FM and internally you'll have noticed the SIB's and the fact that we've had, I did 6 meetings in the last 2 days with staff, the Managing Director of Television had done 4 in television 2 weeks ago, the Managing Director in Radio had done 2, so we've had more meetings with staff in the past couple of months

NK: *First hand*

Ans: Yeah and that's all part of a view as to how we should talk to ourselves as a group that has been guided through a HR view of things

NK: *And how can this impact on the delivery of strategic and the message for the various stakeholders*

Ans: Well the first and obvious thing would be that we achieve the cuts that we're requiring at the moment. Now we may not which will mean that we'll have to go back again with the HR to think about the alternatives to that to achieve the same outcome and that will happen through the fact that there is a consistent line of communication through key people. Most of those key people are at the centre at the moment, whether it's downstairs or on this floor, either in communications or in HR and I think what we'll need to do then is to consider how that's going to work through the IBD's, I'm only talking about the next period and then in general assuming that no more than the rest of the country we begin to see light at the end of the tunnel, HR need to be the very first people saying now is the time to embrace change and challenge in a completely new way and to, like we said to, even before the current troubles, I remember the first meeting I had with SIPTU Branch Secretary, I said I would love to do another overarching deal, transformation is gone, there is no point in us talking about the benefits of transformation any longer because we need a new deal and the new deal has to be fundamentally different from ones that we've done in the past. It's going to take us a long, long time to get that through but we need to be thinking about that now

NK: So, in your opinion and again talking the long direction and maybe stepping out of the current climate a little bit. The key challenges that face the HR unit and the organisation overall

Ans: There are two key challenges to the organisation, the obvious one is funding, whether it's funding from the commercial side as evidence now in the current pressure or in future funding from public sources, if the ideologies in political go a different way, if they decide there should be no public subsidy for broadcasting, funding is going to be a constant issue for RTE in either the commercial or the public side and the other side of that is then necessarily arranging the services in such a way that you optimise the audiences for them. That doesn't mean you always maximise them, it means you at every given stage you know who it is you want to talk to and you're getting to that group of people more effectively than any of your competitors and that's the challenge

NK: "XX XX" thank you very much I really appreciate your time

Research Subject 5 Interview

Text hidden to protect anonymity of the subject will be marked as follows "XX
XX"

NK: *So just for background "XX XX" can you just tell me a little bit about yourself and your career history here in RTE*

Ans: "XX

XX"

NK: *Great. What, if any, is your experience of the HR unit in your area*

Ans: In the area I'm now working in or

NK: *Well you can talk about here or previous whichever suits best for you*

Ans: My experience as in what level of engagement I would have had

NK: *Yeah*

Ans: I suppose, I'll confine it because I've worked in so many different levels in RTE, I'm going to confine it my experience working as a senior manager in output divisions, so there would, there is a lot of contact with HR, some of that contact is around just general sort of housekeeping and tracking numbers of contracts, the issuing of contracts, renewal of contracts, the management of things like incremental reviews, when we used to do incremental reviews and so on. Around competitions, the organisation of competitions etc and then there are issues to do with staff management both on, in a positive context from the point of view of training and staff development and then also when there are more difficult matters that arise around issues of say problems with staff and disciplinary matters and then obviously, there haven't been for quite a long time but around areas such as Industrial Relations and disputes and very much in RTE, it very much depends on the calibre of the HR unit in different areas, the level of engagement and the level of service that there is. I would have to say that in television, the general approach was very much to pass a lot of the decision making back onto managers and say you're the manager you decide whereas I found it interesting in coming over to radio, it's much more proactive and hands on, which my preference would be for that because I actually think that managers are not experts in HR and they come from a whole range of backgrounds and we rely on the HR people to be familiar with corporate policy in different areas, to keep up to speed on best practice, to be able to research and come back to you and say well the way they're handling this in telly is this way, the way they're handling it in other areas is such and such and also to have a history, a history of the place and a

history of people and a really good sense of where there might be little landmines that you don't want to walk on. I've found in "XX XX" now it's been very good since I came back, that's very much the HR approach here

NK: *To you what's your understanding of HR*

Ans: My understanding of HR is that it is an essential part of the business and works very closely with management in assisting managers to manage all of the areas I've listed above, it doesn't manage them for the manager, it works with management and advises the managers on everything to do really with staff

NK: *Describe the HR function in RTE corporate*

Ans: The HR function in RTE corporate, oh that's quite a tricky question, I would have thought, well what the HR function should be, I'm now saying whether it is or isn't, what the HR function in corporate should be would be to bring a degree of consistency, since we decentralised HR into the business divisions, to make sure that there is a consistency in approach in matters to do with our engagement with staff on both the positives and the negatives to do with staff management, so that staff truck with each other, the unions all talk to each other and what we don't want is particular business divisions doing to solo runs on how they manage particular issues, their approach to pay terms, conditions, IR, HR, personnel management such that once a precedents has been set, that then tends to become the norm in an organisation like this and it's very difficult to pull back from that. So that would be an essential part to support the HR function in the various business divisions and to also on micro issues to engage with the group of unions and to engage with the managers association and to funnel business that goes to the IRT

NK: *Fair enough, what's your understanding of how it operates*

Ans: I suppose my understanding of how it operates, it's kind of difficult because as a manager you don't actually have a huge sense of, you're not dealing with corporate HR very much, it tends to be the HR managers who deal with it. I would have a sense that it is not as dynamic as it has been, that's, it's been a little bit emasculated for want of a better word since everything spilled back out to the IBD's but I think that that's changing at the moment because RTE is such a critical condition and because there has been a HR central has played a key role in all of the discussions with the TUG over the proposed pay cuts and all of the other work practice changes and I think that's actually giving central HR a bit of balls again, so I think that that's probably a good thing

NK: *And to what extent are you aware of current policies, practices and processes undertaken by the HR unit*

Ans: Which HR unit

NK: *You're own HR unit or the central HR unit*

Ans: Just ask me that question again

NK: *What extent are you aware of current policies, practices and processes, I suppose I'm talking about policies that we're bound to adhere to etc, etc and the communicating of polices back to staff*

Ans: I think I would be reasonably aware of them yeah

NK: *What changes if any are you aware of the HR function over the last 8 years since transformation, the IBD's, devolving*

Ans: What it has done is it has moved, the positives are that it has moved HR out into the business divisions, so HR is much closer to the coal face, now the interesting thing is because of the way industrial relations have played out since transformation, RTE has been in general a fairly quiet period of time so I suppose I would have a concern that while on the one hand, the HR function is closer to the coalface on the other hand I would slightly worry that there is very little experience now out in those IBD's in terms of managing through more difficult times. I don't know whether that experience has been lost or it is all at the centre and I think it's very important that there is that level of experience out in the business divisions as well. Also the history, there has been a lot of change in the people working in the business divisions and they have come in and they haven't necessarily gone through central HR, there has been recruitment straight into the business divisions as well so again we'll see now I suspect over the next 6 to 9 months whether there is that level of experience to work with management in managing through what are going to be very difficult times. But the pluses are that people are closer to the ground and in areas where the HR function is performing well, it means that there is really good support, that the HR, here in "XX XX" they are very close to what's going on out on the floor, you get very good feedback and very good information. People use them a lot, they drop in and out a lot to the HR people here and often issues don't become issues because somebody will go in and talk to somebody if they need to get a bit of a steer, very proactive

NK: *Super, I suppose you've answered the next question, how does your HR unit perform overall versus other divisions*

Ans: Well I only really want to talk about the division I'm in at the moment and I've only been here "XX

XX" and up to this point I have to say I find the "XX XX" HR operation is very professional, it's quite a small group but it's very hands on, there is very good relationships with the various output areas in "XX XX" and they've also and it's a small but important thing in the last 2 years, one of the people who was recruited into the area has fluent Irish and that has meant a big difference for the management of "XX

XX", a lot of happiness in "XX XX" that there is somebody in the HR function can conduct the business through Irish, that's important, they make a real effort to try and stay in touch with what's going on, in "XX XX" because of the fact that they're not centrally located. In general, now at times again we'll see and I think if you were asking me in 6 months time because I think we're going to go through very choppy waters for the next 6 months, I might be better positioned to tell you but up to now, very positive, very good, very professional, proactive

NK: *And what obstacles would you see as blocking the HR unit from being truly effective and reaching it's fullest potential*

Ans: Here in "XX XX"

NK: *Yes, we'll stick to "XX XX"*

Ans: I don't know, I do think that people heading up HR units, they need to be HR specialists, I think there may have been a tradition in RTE for a period where people moved into those functions but that wasn't their background, I actually think you need it. I think also you need, I do think people need experience, RTE is a big organisation and people need experience in equivalent public sector organisations, either in RTE having worked their way up or if they're coming in at a more senior level, they do need experience coming in, experience from other equivalent heavily unionised similar type organisation, so somebody with a background in say An Post or Aer Lingus or the ESB or any of those organisations would bring I think to RTE a level of understanding of how we operate. I mean it is difficult sometimes if one is at meetings and you might be in the company of a senior manager who perhaps just thinks that there is no need to go through due process, there is no requirement to go to the TUG on issues, A, B or C, in the long term that person may be right but RTE has a collective agreement system, we operate through processes and procedures and we've had a long period of no industrial unrest in RTE because of that and until we make a corporate decision to move away from that, which I don't think we're going to in the short term, we have to operate to the agreements that we have in place. So I think that kind of understanding, somebody from the private sector doesn't necessarily always understand that and there is an adjustment period involved for them

NK: *Absolutely, a huge culture shock*

Ans: Yeah

NK: *I'm going onto the current economic environment now. What are the current challenges facing the HR unit and can you describe the business pressures that RTE is currently facing, I suppose they're linked really "XX XX"*

Ans: Well the business pressures I think I don't really need to say them, I think you know what they are. So the challenges for the HR unit are to try and to work very closely with managers as we are, we've already since the start of this year been in a situation where we've been looking to drive down our personnel costs so this has meant that there has been a lot of contract renegotiation for people who are on fixed term contracts. We have been trying not to fill vacancies as they've arisen on the basis that we have to drive our head count down. We are in the middle difficult negotiations around pay, people are feeling very vulnerable particularly the lower paid in RTE and this is causing a lot of anxiety, we have the, we're heading into a period of looking to reduce our numbers, hopefully through voluntary agreements but we don't know that yet. So all of this means that there is a continuous scrutiny of every aspect of our operation and that managers are asking the question all the time, do I really need this person here, could I do this differently, could I change this work practice, could I get away with not replacing this person, so in an area where HR is functioning well, they're absolutely at the coalface in all of that with management and that's what happening here in "XX XX" and a lot of the time the HR manager is actually coming to the "XX XX" board to be part of the discussions that we're having around schedule changes and reducing our numbers. The challenge then is to contribute to that and to give sound and good advice to managers to help to maximise all of those cost

reduction efforts while at the same time maintaining output and maintaining industrial peace

NK: *HR and the strategic contribution, so in your opinion, can you define what strategic human resource management is, like what does it involve*

Ans: I suppose strategic human resource management is about looking at the skill set of the workforce as it currently exists, looking at the direction in which RTE is moving strategically and bringing advice to bear to management on getting the best possible fit between the skill set and the numbers and the capacities of the workforce and where RTE is going to be over the next 5 to 10 years

NK: *Does the HR unit succeed in delivering a strategic contribution to the organisation as a whole*

Ans: I haven't had huge experience of it in "XX XX" so far and I really only want to talk about "XX XX" but my sense is that they will, I mean what little discussion we have had around this topic and I have to say it's not a topic that we've had the time to discuss since I arrived but there has been a little bit around it about things like do you we need to develop a new grade, a kind of catch all grade that would combine VA's, researchers and VCO's, looking at the skill set of and looking at DAB and what capacity there is for different kind of production teams to work in digital broadcasting if we were to go further down the road of DAB, there is good engagement around and quite good knowledge, it seems to me in "XX XX" around the capacities of individuals and their appropriateness for programmes so that if you're looking at changes to the schedule there is a reasonable sense from HR, although they appreciate that that's not their, they don't schedule, it's not their function. They do work quite closely to seems, certainly with "XX XX" I in terms of assignments and scheduling so yeah they are contributing

NK: *How can the HR unit add value in RTE*

Ans: Well at the moment what they're doing is working with us to try and reduce cost which is certainly adding value and I suppose at it's most basic in a time of such enormous financial pressure, that's the most crucial thing that they're doing, they added value by helping us manage as effectively as we can and a big reduction in costs and a realignment of the organisation so that we are better matched for the income we're likely to have in the years ahead. If we were in boom times, I suppose what we would be saying would be that the HR function could add value by working with management to identify new opportunities for us to get into to deliver other additional public service value or generate additional commercial revenue

NK: *Is the HR unit aligned to contribute to the longer term objectives of the organisation or is it seen merely as a service provider to internal customers, like line manager*

Ans: It's probably a bit more the later at the moment, there isn't a huge HR engagement in terms of the development of the strategic plan, it tends to more the strategic plan is developed, it's being rolled out, there are particular targets and ambitions for different areas and HR works then with those areas to deliver to the strategic plan

NK: *And can this be realised or measured, are there any changes at the moment that might involve HR more strategically in the business*

Ans: Well we haven't progressed the implications of the current financial situation, they haven't hugely feed into a reworked strategic plan and I think that's something, literally there hasn't been the time to do that but I would think if we get through the next few months we maybe doing a new strategic plan and in that context there may be a role for HR to help to, to work I suppose with senior management and the executive board in outlining what the shape of the organisation is likely to be over the next 5 years and the steps we need to take to get there

NK: *Who are the customers of value added HR services*

Ans: In general, the customers are essentially the managers and the IBD who are managing the staff but also the staff are customers to the extent that there is a welfare aspect to personnel and welfare and staff development and training aspect so they're also the customers

NK: *What improvements can be made to enhance the role of the HR unit to add value to the business of RTE*

Ans: You asked me that one already did you not

NK: *In the IBD's, this is just more over for the business of RTE*

Ans: See question 4 above, whatever answer I gave you because I'll just be repeating myself

NK: *So thinking about the topics we've just hit on there, would you like to add anything regarding the role and effectiveness of the HR unit or do you think you've covered everything*

Ans: Just that when HR is working really well it is just an invaluable tool, it really is both from the point of view of being proactive in coming to managers and saying you know I just think you need to think about X, commenting on a proposal to go in a particular direction or a proposal how to achieve a particular goal, good HR advice is able to reference previous experience in that area or reference the reactions on the ground. Somebody who is out and about, having cups of coffee with people and talking to them and being able to say, yeah that will play ok, people feel X, people feel, really good intelligence is just enormously helpful and an understanding of the dynamics of the organisation and particularly when we're making difficult decisions and managing our way through a difficult period which we are at the moment, that's really when the value of good HR comes to the fore

NK: *And two last question "XX XX", on what basis should the role of HR unit be shaped to deliver a major improvement to the internal and external communication channels of RTE*

Ans: Read me that again

NK: *On what basis could the role of the HR unit be shaped to deliver major improvement in the internal and external communication channels of RTE*

Ans: I don't have a view really, I think we have good internal communications and HR are part of that, so are communications, I mean communications doesn't really sit just with HR, there is a communications manager in television, we've just appointed a communications manager in "XX XX" and part of that will be to do with internal staff communications as well, we have a Marconi system, we've just started a newsletter in "XX XX", there is a real responsibility in difficult times to communicate clearly to staff but I don't see a requirement to reshape HR to address that

NK: *Ok, I think you've covered everything; Many thanks for your time "XX XX."*

APPENDIX 4

Project Timescale

Gant t Chart

