
**The decentralisation and devolution of the HR Function within RTÉ.
The impact on HR Professionals, Line Managers and the Human
Resources Function itself.**

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment for a B.A. in Human
Resource Management.

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Declaration

I hereby certify that this material, which I now submit for assessment of the programme of study leading to the award of a B.A. in Human Resource Management is entirely my own work and has not been taken from the work of others save and to the extent that such work has been cited and acknowledged within the text of my work.

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Abstract

This dissertation explores both the devolution of HR activities to line managers and the decentralisation of the Human Resources Function within organisations.

The project seeks to examine the effect these two concepts have had on line managers and HR professionals within the organisation, with particular reference to the effect it has had on staff in RTÉ.

The literature is reviewed and focuses mainly on the changing role of HR and how companies are using devolution and decentralisation today in an effort to improve performance.

Through the use of qualitative research the researcher set out to gain an insight into HR and line managers' views and thoughts on the devolution and decentralisation of HR within RTÉ.

The research is then analysed in conjunction with the literature. The conclusions arising from this set out a number of recommendations on how the role of line manager and HR Professional could be enhanced within RTÉ.

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Introduction

This research is focused on Radió Telefís Éireann (RTÉ). The question, which this project seeks to address is, the extent to which the devolution of HR activities and the decentralisation of the Human Resource Function within an organisation, impacts on line managers and HR practitioners.

This research project explores the literature on devolution and decentralisation, with particular reference to the Human Resources Function.

It then seeks the views of nine employees, both line managers and HR Professionals in RTÉ, through semi-structured interviews, on how the devolution of HR activities and the decentralisation of the Human Resources Function have impacted directly on them.

The material gathered was then analysed and a conclusion was drawn on the extent to which the above-mentioned staff members have been affected by these changes.

Overview

Radió Telefís Éireann is Ireland's Public Service Broadcasting Organisation. It has provided a radio service since 1926 and a television service since 1961. Its current portfolio includes three national television channels; RTÉ1, Network2, TG4 and four national radio stations; Radio1, 2FM, Lyric FM and Raidió na Gaeltachta. Complimenting these flagship television and radio stations are a range of ancillary services; Aertel, a teletext information service; RTÉ Online and various performing groups which include the RTÉ Concert Orchestra, the National Symphony Orchestra, the Philharmonic Choir, the Vanburgh String Quartet and Cór na nÓg.

Challenges facing RTÉ – The Organisational Context

Until a few years ago RTÉ enjoyed a very comfortable position in the marketplace where it had a monopoly on the competition. However, there has been a significant increase in competition in the broadcasting industry in Ireland in recent years, so much so that within the Republic of Ireland alone, there are currently ten commercial channels all competing for audience share; RTÉ1, Network2, TG4, TV3, Sky One, Sky News, Sky Sports, MTV, Nickelodeon and E4. This, coupled with an increase in audience fragmentation, a world-wide drop in advertising and uncertainty over licence fee increases have forced RTÉ to look very carefully at their operations and identify possible areas of improvement.

■ Need for change identified

As a result of the challenges mentioned above, RTÉ faced financial crisis. It needed to be able to operate in a transparent manner and be held accountable for its use of the licence fee. This required RTÉ to be more cost effective, more efficient in its operations and more flexible in its cost structures.

“In view of the unsustainable deficit, RTÉ needs to make change happen faster and at a lower cost than it has done in the past, driving the action necessary to create a more accountable and flexible organisation.” (Logical & KPMG 2002:5)

A review of RTÉ’s structure and operations was undertaken by an internal Project Team who recommended the adoption of a new structure for RTÉ;

“In order to ensure the successful development and implementation of the corporate strategy, it is essential that an appropriate organisation structure is in place.” (RTÉ Project Team, 1998)

The team proposed the adoption of divisional structures and it was felt some of the benefits in adopting this type of structure were;

- Better Output: combining all relevant resources under a single business division should maximise output and enable additional revenue to be reinvested in programming.
- Lower cost: central overhead will be reduced and pressure created for all costs to drive output and / or revenues.
- Transparency: clearer measures of performance in all divisions, based on Key Performance Indicators; this will demonstrate the value for money obtained from the licence fee to Government and the public, as well as providing the information to make better decisions both within the business divisions and RTÉ as a whole.
- Accountability: giving decision making authority to each division will facilitate better business decisions, with clear responsibility for results.
- **Integrated Business Divisions**

As a result of these recommendations RTÉ's internal structure has undergone significant change in the past two years and has seen a move away from a highly centralised, hierarchical structure to a decentralised, flatter structure. A process was introduced whereby staff from a number of previously centrally controlled functions such as Human Resources, Technology, Sales and Marketing, Finance and Communications have been decentralised into newly established Integrated Business Divisions (IBD's). This integration means the services being provided by these functions will be specifically channelled towards contributing to the success of the IBD.

These newly established IBD's were set up in an attempt to ensure greater cost effectiveness, transparency and accountability and to provide a more streamlined service capable of responding to the changing needs and circumstances of the broadcasting industry. The Managing Director of each IBD has responsibility for cost, content and

revenue and it is hoped that Senior Management in the IBD's will achieve greater levels of control and accountability within their particular division.

The Knock on Effects for the Personnel Function

Prior to this change, the Personnel function within RTÉ was a perfect example of a traditional, bureaucratic structure. It was a completely reactive function, had no input into Corporate Strategy or the running of the organisation. Both management and staff in RTÉ often questioned its value, role and significance within the organisation.

Upon review of the Personnel Function the review body concluded;

“It is widely believed that the primary responsibility for people management currently lies with the Personnel Division, and that this responsibility should lie with line management. There is a lack of clarity in this area, with apparent overlap of responsibilities. There should be shared ownership between line management and HR for the development of people management strategies which address overall business needs” (RTÉ Project Team, 1998)

It was very clear that RTÉ felt it was no longer viable for line managers to ignore people management issues in their area. It was emphasised that people management needed to be the responsibility of **all** managers, not just Personnel Specialists.

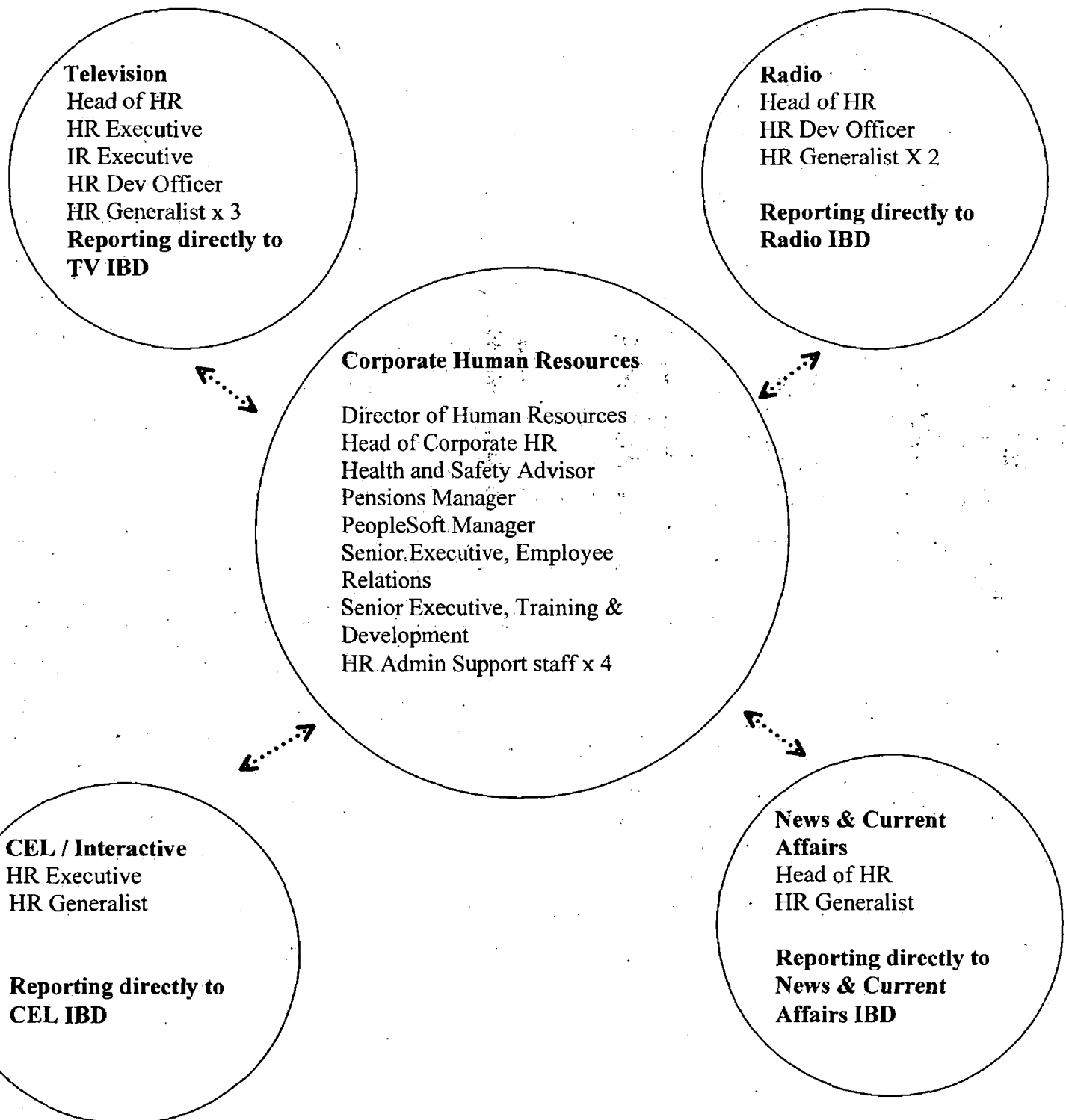
Therefore, in an effort to address this, RTÉ revolutionised its Personnel Division. It created four separate decentralised HR teams in an effort to facilitate the devolution of HR activities to the line, while retaining a much smaller corporate centre. These teams were physically located in their respective IBD's. The teams would report directly to the Managing Director of their IBD with a dotted line reporting relationship back to Corporate HR.

It was hoped that the **devolution** of HR activities would encourage local ownership of issues and in RTÉ's case, it was felt that if the IBD's were going to be held responsible for the Division's performance, they needed to have control over the factors that influenced this: hence the **decentralisation** of functions such as HR, IT, Sales and Marketing and Finance.

A New Structure for HR

Figure 1.1 below indicates the current division of labour within HR in RTÉ.

Figure 1.1



An essential goal for the decentralised HR teams was to ensure that the HR dimension was fully assimilated into the thinking of line management, when considering changes and developments.

In addition the HR teams were to focus on enabling line managers to successfully take up the full range of HR duties and responsibilities. It was envisaged that they would act as consultants to line managers: that they would advise, consult and facilitate managers on the various aspects of HR (e.g. recruitment, retention, resolution of local IR issues). It was hoped this would help move HR away from the 'doer' role they previously held.

It was hoped this move would enable the various IBD's to make speedier decisions and empower them to become self managed teams, which would then lead to the development of a flexible, dynamic fast changing workforce which could adapt to the changing environment and strive for competitive advantage in the marketplace.

- **The role of the Corporate Centre**

While recommending the need for decentralised HR teams to be physically located in the IBD's, the review group also recognised that consistency in policies and strategies was essential.

They recommended that the role of the Personnel Division at the centre of the organisation should be "to build a shared mind-set and focus across RTE on people management issues, and to help create a vision and develop a consensus about the people management ethos of the organisation." (RTE Project Team, 1998)

In order to deliver on this they recommended that the Corporate HR Centre should;

- Lead the development of HR strategies and policies to meet the needs of RTE in a competitive environment.

- Lead the development or redefinition of guidelines and procedures to support the devolution of responsibility for people management to line management.
- Provide specialist support and services to line managers to enable them to undertake their people management role competently.

The HR corporate centre in RTÉ is there to provide support to management at all levels on matters of policy implementation and development. It also supports the decentralised and devolved HR function in the line (IBD).

A dotted line reporting structure back to the centre has been established as there was a fear that some HR teams would go 'native' and put the department's operational needs in front of corporate HR procedures and policies. This is a noted problem with devolution, as Hall (1998:86) points out. By having this dotted line reporting structure it is hoped that the Corporate HR will have some role in monitoring HR practices within the various teams to ensure they operate within company best practice guidelines. There is some debate within RTÉ at present as to whether or not this is proving successful.

It is against this background that the concept of devolving HR activities to line managers and the decentralisation of the HR Function is being examined.

The researcher wishes to identify the impact this has had on management and human resources with RTÉ and if this concurs with the findings from current literature.

Literature Review

This section is concerned with reviewing current literature on the changing role of HR in today's competitive environment and how companies are using devolution and decentralisation today in an effort to improve performance.

The Changing Face of Organisations

Organisations today face a number of challenges. Karen May (1998) identifies these as

- “environmental pressures such as increasing globalisation, rapid technological change and tougher competition.
- organisational changes such as new structures and hierarchies, new ways of assigning work and a very high rate of change.”

“As a consequence of these forces of change; organisations are finding themselves in the midst of a revolution in organising and managing people. A flatter, less bureaucratic, less hierarchical, faster and more responsive organisation is emerging as the model for the future.” (Beer as cited in Ulrich et al., 1997:84)

Traditionally the most common organisational structure in large organisations was the bureaucracy, which typically grouped people together by function. It was felt there were efficiencies and economies of scale to be gained from having like-minded specialists working together. Control and decision making in bureaucracies was retained centrally and typically exercised in a top down fashion. Buchanan et al. (1997:326) felt that a “greater uniformity in decisions” take place in a centralised structure and that because “top level managers are more aware of an organisations future plans they are more likely to make decisions in the company's best interests.”

However, concerns have emerged in recent years as to whether or not this structure can really add value in today's ever-changing environment.

Some weaknesses of this type of structure are:

- Obsessive concern with following the rules.
- Functional goals can override overall organisational goals.
- Inability to respond rapidly to change.
- “There are often too many levels of authority. Even if top management formally have a lot of control it is often hard to exercise it.” (Farferfjall, 1995)

“In many well-published cases, value has actually been created simply by splitting up the parts.” (Hewitt as cited in Ulrich et al., 1997:44)

As a result we have witnessed a growing trend towards decentralisation within organisations.

The Stage has been set for change in HR

All of this has had a direct impact on the structure and operations of the Human Resource Function within organisations.

“Traditionally in bureaucratic organisations, HR professionals created and administered the systems-training, selection and rewards. The HR function added value by creating systems that produced bureaucratically correct behaviour as well as the predictable and orderly development of people and their careers. Not surprisingly it gained a reputation as a bastion of the status quo.” (Albers Mohrman as cited in Ulrich et al., 1997:242)

But, Albers Mohrman (cited in Ulrich et al., 1997:242) states “the era of traditional bureaucratic organisations is over: stability needs to be replaced change innovations and new organisational designs.”

“CEO’s are now aware that organisational effectiveness is crucial to competitiveness and realise that the current HR function is expensive and ill-equipped to help them build a competitive organisation.” (Beer as cited in Ulrich et al., 1997:85)

“Line Executives see HR as an expensive function, which makes a negligible contribution to their business.” (Beer as cited in Ulrich et al., 1997:86)

“This can no longer be sustained or justified. Pressures for cost reduction not only demand a different corporate organisation, they place pressure on the HR function to be cost effective.” (Beer as cited in Ulrich et al., 1997:85)

This represents both a major threat and a major opportunity for the HR function. The HR function can deliver value to organisations by “helping them navigate the uncharted waters of the new era.” (Albers Mohrman as cited in Ulrich et al., 1997:242)

A Vision of the new HR role within organisations

“There is little question that HR is undergoing profound change.” (Beer as cited in Ulrich et al., 1997:84)

It is broadly acknowledged that HR must take on a more strategic role within the organisation, with HR objectives being fully integrated into the overall aims of the business.

“To make a successful transformation, the HR function will have to shed its traditional administrative compliance and service role and adapt a new strategies role concerned with developing the organisation and the capability of its managers” (Beer as cited in Ulrich et al., 1997:88)

He believes that the new HR function “will be much smaller but more high powered; its key role will be strategic.” (1997:90)

Karen May (1998) concurs with this, stating “within these pressured organisations, there is a need for, and opportunity for the Human Resources function to play a critical role in helping organisations navigate through these transitions.” She believes that the HR Professionals of the future need to be people who will understand the pressures of running an effective business in today’s market.”

She outlines two strategies that have been adopted by organisations in an effort to respond to the environmental and organisational pressures mentioned above.

- **Business Unit Assignment (Decentralisation)**

“Some companies are assigning HR employees to specific business units as a way of enabling them to develop a focussed relationship with a small part of the business. This relationship can be enforced when the HR person has a direct relationship with the leader of the business unit. In these situations, the Central HR group usually provides information and services to the ‘distributed’ HR representatives, who then deliver the service personally

to the Business Unit. One advantage of this structure is that it fosters flexibility and creativity as the local HR practitioner can modify and tailor processes and services to meet the needs of their assigned Business Units.”

“At the **business unit level**, human resource partners will work closely with the general manager and his/her team to access, diagnose and develop the alignment of the organisation with strategy and aspirational values. This role will demand of the HR specialist a deep understanding of the business plus expertise in organisational design, organisation change and intervention methods. Analytical and interpersonal skills needed to facilitate change will also be essential.” (Beer as cited in Ulrich et al., 1997:90)

- **Sharing responsibilities for HR activities between HR & line manager**

“This approach allows the manager to be more fully involved in the development and direction of employees, with HR as a resource: it requires, however, that these managers have the capabilities needed to work through issues with employees successfully. Many companies are therefore increasing line managers access to information.” (Karen May, 1998)

- **Corporate HR**

Corporate HR staff will consist of a few experts in a number of disciplines (for example compensation and management development). They will also provide support general managers and their HR partners (in the line). (Ulrich et al., 1997:90)

- **Summary**

Organisations face a number of challenges in today’s dynamic business environment. This is forcing organisations to look at how they can ‘do things better’ in order to achieve competitive advantage.

As a result there has been a growing trend to decentralise and this has had a direct impact on the Human Resources Function within organisations.

HR now needs to prove that they are directly contributing to the improved performance of the business. They need to adopt a more strategic approach to help develop the capabilities of its managers. (Beer as cited in Ulrich et al., 1997:88) This has led to the devolvement of HR responsibility to line managers and the decentralisation of the HR function to local level units within the organisation.

“Companies based on rigid hierarchy will be consigned to the dustbin of history. In the brave new world of decentralised organisations, managers will have to learn to cultivate and co-ordinate, rather than command and control.” (Simon London, 2004)

This researcher will now look more specifically at current literature on these two concepts:

Devolution and Decentralisation what's the difference?

▪ Definitions

Although two very separate concepts, with two different meanings and therefore, very different implications for both the organisation and the HR function, (depending on which approach is adopted) I found that a number of texts or authors do not make any distinction between these two concepts. Torrington & Hall (1998:46) acknowledge, “the word devolution has often been confused with decentralisation of personnel activities” and they found that the literature on devolution is “often intermingled with that on the decentralisation of the Personnel Function and it is difficult to disentangle the two.” (Hall et al., 1998(a):41)

For example, Buchanan & Huczynski's (1997:326) definition of decentralisation refers to: “authority and responsibility for decision making being dispersed more widely downwards and given to the operating units, branches and lower level managers.” However a number of authors do not necessarily believe decentralisation goes hand in hand with the devolvement or decentralisation of authority. In some cases organisations may have a decentralised structure with authority still being retained centrally.

Torrington and Hall (1998:47) associate decentralisation with personnel's physical location in the organisation and according to them “devolution is to do with line managers, as the personnel function transfers some of its responsibilities and activities out of the personnel function altogether so that line managers have fuller responsibility and scope to do their jobs.”

They differentiate between these two processes by stating that decentralisation applies to “changes in departmental structure and devolution to changes in the allocation of authority.” (Torrington and Hall 1998:47)

Keen, as cited in Torrington and Hall, (1998:75) however, argues in favour of devolving authority when undergoing a move to a decentralised structure. He believes “ it is important for departments to have alignment between accountability and authority for activities.”

RTE is an example of a company that moved from a centralised to a decentralised structure but who also attempted to devolve authority for a number of HR issues to line management. The aim was that the HR function would be a shared responsibility between HR and line managers and it was hoped the physical decentralisation of HR would facilitate this.

For the purpose of this exercise I will use Torrington and Hall’s definitions of both devolution and decentralisation (as outlined above). I intend to discuss the two issues separately as they have very different implications for line management, HR professionals and the organisation as a whole.

The Emergence of Devolution

“The issue of the allocation of people management responsibilities between line management and the specialist personnel function is as old as the function itself.” (Hall et al., 1998(a):42)

Although it was seen as a background issue for a number of years literature now suggests that “devolution of people management activities to the line is very much a live issue and desirable.” (Hall et al., 1998(a):44)

Some of the reasons for this surge in popularity may be:

- **Fewer managers in the organisation**

“In the past few years, downsizing and delayering have been accompanied by a massive shift in day-to-day decision making to line managers” (www.wainwright.trust.btinternet.co.uk, 2004)

Organisations have undergone a significant amount of downsizing and delayering over the past number of years in an effort to reduce hierarchies, create a flatter organisation and cut costs. As a result there are fewer managers in the organisation. This has created a situation where Senior Managers, who must now concentrate on developing the overall strategy of the organisation, pass a lot of the day-to-day decision-making authority to managers lower down in the hierarchy.

- **A reduced personnel function**

HR functions have also been affected by downsizing resulting in significantly reduced HR departments. Again this impacts on line managers, as previous levels of HR support is no longer available to them.

HR no longer has the “administrative capacity or the staffing levels to solve everybody’s problems; so the line managers will have to do it.” (Torrington and Hall 1998:61)

- **The Changing Role of HR**

According to Torrington and Hall there has been a “deliberate attempt to reposition HR specialists and the Personnel Function within the organisation.” (1998:68)

HR, in an effort to add more value to the organisation, is now moving from an administrative or operational role to a more strategic role within the organisation.

However, Colling and Ferner, as cited in Hall et al. (1998(a):44) find that HR, in trying to rid themselves of this administrative role, in an attempt to take on a more strategic role, still have “to intervene in the detail of line decision making and become involved in firefighting.” It seems then that there are difficulties when attempting to make the jump from an operational to a strategic role.

- **The rate and pace of change in organisations**

Nowadays organisations need to be flexible, innovative and adaptable to change.

Devolution “provides the opportunity to create an adaptive organisation.” (Purcell, 1995) It allows for decisions to be made more quickly, with the relevant people making the decision; that is people who have an awareness and a working knowledge of the various problems or challenges facing them on a daily basis. It also allows for flexibility within the organisation and fosters creativity – these are all essential requirements in organisations today if they want to retain their competitive edge. (Leach as cited in Torrington and Hall 1998:65)

According to Buchanan & Huchzynski (1997:326) there are a number of reasons why devolution can enable organisations to be more responsive, dynamic and flexible:

- Lower level decisions can be made more easily.
- Lower level management problems can be dealt with on the spot.
- Lower level managers have an opportunity to develop their decision-making skills.
- The motivation of lower level managers is greater when they are entrusted to make decisions, rather than always following orders issued at a higher level.
- An organisation's workload is spread so as to allow top-level managers more time for strategic planning.

According to Joseph Foegen (1998) "a vigorous effort is being made in benchmark firms, not only to seek constantly better ways to do things, but to do so more democratically, for assumed long-run effectiveness. As a result "decision making has been 'pushed downward' with a vengeance."

Malone (1998) feels "the advantages of decentralising decisions to local decision makers is increased motivation, which often leads to higher quality of output and more creativity and initiative."

Implementing Devolution

“The way in which devolution is implemented appears to have an impact on its success.”

(Torrington and Hall 1998:66)

Although very little is written on how best to effect devolution, there are a number of factors that seem to impact on its success and these include:

- **Top management support**

“A lack of support from top management” was outlined as one of the main barriers to the devolution of responsibility. (Torrington and Hall, 1998:49)

It is vital that senior managers’ give their support if any change programme is to be successful within the organisation and devolution is no exception. It is essential that senior managers clearly communicate their support for the initiative to all employees in the organisation.

- **Speed of Implementation**

“Those personnel departments which had attempted to manage the change slowly and provide considerable support had made greater progress towards devolution.” (Torrington and Hall, 1998:66)

It is felt that devolution is more likely to be successful in organisations where change has been introduced incrementally. Sufficient support must be made available to line management throughout the process.

- **Practical support**

Managers need to be provided with training to facilitate them in taking up their new responsibilities. “A number of managers may feel they are not equipped with the relevant

skills to take on this new role. It is quite common for managers to have been chosen for their role 'based on technical merit' and they may not possess the skills required to embrace their new 'HR' role." (Torrington and Hall, 1998:64-66)

"Devolution is an ongoing process rather than a shifting of responsibility and getting there involves HR working with line managers to pass on skills and to give them confidence."

(Hall et al., 1998(a):50)

- **Attitudes of Line Managers**

The success or otherwise of devolution will depend greatly on how receptive line managers are to the change; whether they shy away from it out of fear or embrace it.

"In line with a great deal of current practice and theory, a major issue is the extent to which line managers, the direct bosses of most employees, will take on personnel roles."

(Purcell, 1995)

Guest, as cited in Torrington et al. (1998:65) makes a critical point when he talks of the "attitudes and behaviours of line managers and the need for them to recognise the importance of Human Resources and the need for them to engage in practices which reflect this understanding is crucial."

The attitudes of Line Managers to Devolution

The reaction of line managers was reported to be mixed.

Some “welcomed the involvement and control that the transfer of these responsibilities gave them” (Leach, as cited in Torrington and Hall, 1998:65) while others felt they were being dumped on.

“Although many managers mentioned the positive aspects of devolution there was an air of scepticism towards these changes as “being dumped on” and “cost cutting”. (Holden et al. as cited in T&H (C4 p65)

Many line managers felt that HR just wasn't *their* responsibility, and in international research conducted by Hoogendoorn and Brewster (Hall et al., 1998(a):53) they found that the majority of line managers “did not have the time to carry out personnel activities and did not feel sufficiently skilled to carry them out.” They also found that, even when training was provided, managers felt they didn't have time to attend the course either!

The Attitudes of Personnel Specialists to Devolution

According to Torrington and Hall's research, interviewees “appeared enthusiastic” and spoke of devolution “in very positive terms”. Most felt their role wasn't being done away with; they were simply gaining a new perspective on how best the function could add value to the organisation. (Torrington and Hall, 1998) However, Wilkinson and Marchington (cited in Hall et al., 1998(a):44) argue that there “is still some disagreement as to whether devolution reflects personnel giving away responsibility or having it taken from them.”

Many “identified devolution as a mechanism to rid the personnel department of its administrative image” (Torrington and Hall, 1998:61) and “they saw it as an opportunity to swap operational tasks for perceived higher value strategic involvement” (Torrington and Hall, 1998:68)

Overall HR seemed upbeat about the changes but in addition to their positive views, they expressed a number of concerns too.

- **A fear of a loss of control and power**

“We found not only a reluctance on the part of some line managers to take on personnel responsibilities, but also a reluctance on the part of some HR staff to let go.” (Hall et al., 1998(a):50)

“Therefore it could be argued that they (personnel) are putting a brave face on a change which was forced upon them by a shrinking personnel function and by pressure from the top of the organisation due to the march towards ‘decentralising responsibility and accountability.’” (Torrington and Hall, 1998:69)

- **Difficulty in letting go of some operational activities**

HR may feel there are tasks they are more capable of doing than line managers, and that there are tasks they enjoy doing (e.g. interviewing) which they therefore may not want to give them up.

Additionally it was these tasks that highlighted the importance or significance of HR’s contribution to the organisation in previous times so HR may feel if they let go of these tasks they will become irrelevant to the organisation. (Torrington and Hall, 1998:55)

- **The need to learn new skills**

“To play a strategic role they will have to have analytical and interpersonal skills equal to the best consultant corporations now use to assist them with organisation effectiveness and change issues. Many HR professionals lack these professional skills.” (Beer as cited in Ulrich 1997:92)

To sum up “devolution has potential implications for the role of line managers at all levels, the role and development of Personnel professionals, the feasibility of establishment wide HR strategy and consistency in the handling of day to day people issues.” (Hall et al., 1998(a):41)

Decentralisation

I will look now at the reasons behind organisations move toward decentralisation. In this section I will focus specifically on the decentralisation of HR.

In recent times “decentralisation in organisations has found much more favour” (Torrington and Hall, 1998:73-74) so much so that Torrington and Hall believe “there is considerable evidence to suggest that the divisional form of organisation, as opposed to the traditional functional form is now the most common.” Organisations are beginning to question the effectiveness of the traditional centralised structure in today’s dynamic business environment.

▪ Why has this come about?

“The push behind divisionalisation and decentralisation has been the desire to increase efficiency and performance, particularly in organisations with a very diverse range of businesses.” (Torrington and Hall, 1998:74)

“Over the past number of years the size of companies has decreased. Companies can no longer rely on hierarchy and command as prime sources of direction and control. Companies need to be more agile and flexible.” (John Storey, 2001)

According to Tam (2003) “Decentralised structures favour companies that require local knowledge and quick on-the-spot decisions.”

Purcell (1995) states “Management decentralisation empowers business-unit managers to identify the most appropriate policy and practice that would meet operational requirements and create a consistent and competitive edge for the company.”

“Organisations are using this structure (i.e. decentralisation) in an effort to be more innovative.” (Peters, 1998)

Decentralisation of the Human Resources Function

“The HR organisational model has also followed the decentralised strategy model i.e. a central HR function with broad ‘policy’ guidelines but with the real HR action taking place inside relatively autonomous business units.” (Ulrich et al., 1997:44)

Types of Decentralised HR Structures

Torrington and Hall (1998:81) identify a number of different types of decentralisation and according to them “ the implications of decentralisation both for HR activities and for HR specialists will be heavily influenced by the form of decentralisation adopted.”

Physical Decentralisation Type A

“Where the HR specialist reports directly to the head of the line department in the which they are located.”

Physical Decentralisation Type B

“Where the HR specialist reports to central HR even though there are located in a line department.”

Virtual Decentralisation

In this structure there is no physical relocation of HR but particular HR professionals are assigned responsibility for specific departments within the organisation. (Torrington and Hall, 1998:81-87)

Advantages of a Decentralised HR structure

“Being based in the business rather than in the centre presents some attractive advantages for HR specialists.” (Torrington and Hall, 1998:76)

“The HR Specialist gets the opportunity to become more involved at an operational level in the business.” (Torrington and Hall, 1998:76)

This gives them the advantage of gaining an “understanding of the needs and culture of the business so that delivery of the proper standards of productivity and commitment is ensured” (Torrington and Hall, 1998:76)

“It provides an opportunity for personnel specialists to become more integrated into the business, therefore ensuring their “legitimacy and relevance in the organisation.” (Torrington and Hall, 1998:76-92)

Disadvantages of a Decentralised HR Structure

However, decentralisation seems to result in some disadvantages for the organisation as well as the specialist HR function.

Some of these disadvantages are;

- **Managers will put short-term issues over long-term and focus more on the business demands rather than the overall strategy of the organisation.**

“One of the most common mistakes that managers make when managing a business unit is to believe that they can behave as though they were the Managing Director of an independent company. The key questions for the parent organisation are how it can add value by owning a decentralised set of businesses, and how it can best manage decentralised units.” (Purcell, 1995)

There is a tendency to focus more on the business unit than the overall organisation as managers “only respond to short-term pressures which the business faces rather than any long-term strategic corporate initiative” (Torrington and Hall, 1998: 75)

- **Conflict of interests**

HR specialists in the line may feel pulled in two directions;

“Small groups of specialists, or a single specialist may be much more susceptible to pressure from the line as they are relatively isolated from other specialists and “meeting department needs often brought them into conflict with central HR strategy”.

(Torrington and Hall, 1998:85- 86)

- **Lack of Clarity of roles around the boundaries between the role of the business HR unit and the central HR unit,**

Farrell (cited in Torrington and Hall, 1998:85) spoke of a “lack of clarity in practical terms about how the roles were divided” and a “blurring of the edges and an uncertainty about the central role”.

“Tensions between the central and departmental units were identified and some line managers were unsure about the HR management structure but were much clearer about what to expect from the departmental rather than the central unit.”

“As such it was the local HR officers who were seen to add value while the central unit appeared to be in no man’s land” (Torrington and Hall, 1998: 85)

- **Lack of Communication**

For the most part decentralised HR did not seem to be involved in helping to develop HR policies resulting in central HR implementing policies that were not relevant.

Farrell (cited in Torrington and Hall, 1998:85) reports, “all directors felt HR strategy was formulated from a centrist point of view and that departmental needs had not been taken into account sufficiently.”

Many recognised the need for a two-way flow between central HR and the departments so that departmental needs could inform strategy development yet “there appeared to be no mechanism for breeding departmental HR needs into the centre to inform strategy development.” (Torrington and Hall, 1998:91)

- **Inconsistencies in the way employees are managed**

Farrell reports that the central unit felt they could not *impose* initiatives on departments due to the strength of the decentralised paradigm that exists and his evidence suggests “it was the department which had the greater power and decentralised HR officers aligned themselves with departmental strategy rather than organisational HR strategy when a choice had to be made.” (as cited in Torrington and Hall, 1998:86)

- **Diseconomies of Scale**

“Decentralisation is a mixed blessing. For example, some of the savings will be eaten up when the decentralised companies start to duplicate facilities, information capabilities of staff” (Fagerfjall, 1995)

- **Diminution of the professional role in the centre**

As a result of the prevailing power of the departments Corporate HR is “isolated and marginalised to such an extent that the departmental agenda prevails and Central HR is unable to have any impact on the establishment. In many cases the professionals in central HR are reduced to being ‘auditors’ and ‘monitors’ of practices in the line.” (Torrington and Hall, 1998:94)

To ensure this does not happen better communication and information sharing are required between HR professionals in the centre and the line.

It is with this in mind that I wish to examine the process of Decentralisation and Devolution within RTÉ. Through the use of semi-structured interviews I will identify the impact devolution and decentralisation has had on line managers and personnel specialists and compare these with the experiences identified by academics in the literature review.

Research Methodology

- **Research Aim**

Through both primary and secondary research I wish to examine how the decentralisation and devolution of HR has impacted on the role of line managers, HR Professionals and the Human Resource function itself.

- **Literature Review**

The literature review, which precedes this section, is mainly concerned with looking at what has been written on the subject of the decentralisation of HR and the devolution of its activities to line management.

Given the particular focus of this project the readings referred to in the literature review looks at research carried out between 1980 and 1995 by academics who examined, more specifically, the impact decentralisation and devolution had on HR, line managers and the HR function itself.

However, the researcher found that while much has been written on the subject of decentralisation itself, less has been written on decentralising and devolving the HR Function, and even less again on the impact these changes have had on employees within the organisation.

Therefore it was felt that primary research would augment the findings from the literature on this subject.

Primary Research

▪ Research Objective

To gain an insight into HR and line managers' views and thoughts on the devolution and decentralisation of HR within RTÉ.

“The choice between different research methods should depend upon what you are trying to find out.” (Silverman, 2000:1)

With this in mind the researcher opted to use qualitative research methods to collect the research data.

▪ Rationale

Qualitative Research is the most widely used form of research when trying to delve into how people think and feel about an issue or topic. It deals with the ‘reality’ of a situation from the interviewee’s perspective. Issues pertaining to their experiences or views can then be explored to identify any common patterns or themes.

“Qualitative research generally examines people’s words and actions in narrative or descriptive ways more closely representing the situation as experienced by the participants.” (Maykut, 1994:2)

“The methods used by qualitative researchers exemplify a common belief that they can provide a deeper understanding of social phenomena than would be obtained from purely quantitative data.” (Silverman, 2000:8)

▪ **Data Collection**

A number of different methods were examined to identify which would be most suitable given the focus of this study. Silverman (2000:90) sets out four data collection methods commonly used by qualitative researchers. See **Figure 3.1**

Method	Features	Claim
Observations	Extended periods of contact	Understanding of ‘subcultures’
Texts & Documents	Attention to organisation and use of such material	Understanding of language and other sign systems
Interviews	relatively unstructured and open ended	Understanding ‘experience’
Audio & video Recording	Precise transcriptions of naturally occurring interactions	Understanding of how interaction is organised.

(Fig. 3.1)

The researcher decided to use the interview method to obtain employees’ opinions directly and also decided, upon agreement with the interviewees, to record the interview sessions.

Maykut et al. (1994:79-81) describe an interview as a “conversation with a purpose,” and “the shape that an interview may take has been described in various ways ... ranging from a structured format to a relatively unstructured format.”

“Each format, however, shares a critical commonality: the questions are open-ended and designed to reveal what is important about the phenomenon under study.” (Maykut et al., 2000:81)

This researcher conducted face-to-face interviews with a semi-structured line of questioning.

There was a fear that interviews conducted by myself might lead to some questions being answered in a politically correct manner, as the interviewees might not feel comfortable

expressing their views to a fellow employee. One way to help eliminate this problem was to sequence the questions in such a way that the more difficult questions were left nearer the end of the interview at which time, it was hoped, the interviewee would be more relaxed.

The semi-structured interview format allowed this researcher to develop a framework of questions but also left sufficient flexibility to probe particular areas of interest more deeply or to add follow up questions in light of a particular response. Maykut et al. (1994:87) recommends this approach for beginner researchers!

“In the actual interview situation, the skilled researcher will discover what is important to the interviewees, within the broad boundaries of the interview topics and questions and pursue these new discoveries in the interview.” (Maykut et al. 1994:83)

At all times the focus was on asking open-ended questions in an effort to engage the interviewees in a conversation with the researcher. The probe method was used in light of any additional information coming to light which the researcher felt would be of use to the research topic. A full transcription of the interviews is to be found in **Appendix 1**.

Patton, as cited in Maykut et al. (1994:95) defines a probe as “an interview tool used to go deeper into the interview responses.”

▪ **The Pilot**

The pilot served as a ‘dress rehearsal’ for the ‘real’ research interviews. A strategic sample was chosen and a pilot interview was conducted with fellow colleagues on Wednesday 30th June and Thursday 1st July 04. They made a few suggestions and these were taken into account during the actual research interviews. (e.g. Are the questions clear enough?)

As it had been planned to record the interviews it allowed the researcher an opportunity to test the equipment to ensure it was recording properly and that the recording was sufficiently audible for transcription purposes.

It also afforded the opportunity to practice the interview questions to identify whether or not I was getting the information required. In addition consideration was given to the content and format of the interview and other factor such as pace, setting, interview style and line of questioning.

▪ **Recording the Interview**

Although there is varying opinion on the advantages and / or disadvantages of recording an interview, this researcher felt that by recording the interview she could focus more on the interview itself rather than attempting to take notes during the interview and possibly miss important points made by the interviewees in the process.

This approach does have its drawbacks however, given the requirement to transcribe the interviews onto hard copy. This is an extremely time consuming exercise and it is sometimes felt that the meaning of particular responses are not easily translated onto paper.

▪ **Population and Sample**

The research focused on a population of 116 employees, which consisted of 90 line managers (i.e. those with people management responsibilities within RTÉ) and 26 HR staff.

Purposive sampling (Maykut et al.,1994:57) leads the researcher to interview people who contributed to producing a fuller picture of the research issue, which is why a sample was chosen from the population outlined above.

“We continue to gather information until we reach the saturation point, when newly collected data is redundant with previously collected data.” (Maykut et al.,1994)

This researcher felt she had sufficient information following nine in-depth interviews: three with line managers, three with Corporate HR staff and three with Decentralised HR staff in RTE.

The researcher endeavoured to gain a balanced sample demographically by aiming to secure interviews with significant quotas of both genders and age groups in order to eliminate any biased findings:

- **Confidentiality**

It was requested that the identity of the interviewees' not be revealed and I have honoured this request. Therefore I have not outlined a profile of the interviewee prior to the interview. The only identifying feature I make reference to (this is evident in the transcription) is to whether the interviewee is a line manager (l) a member of a decentralised HR team (d) or a member of Corporate HR (c). Permission was sought from interviewees to do this, and it was granted in the context that it would allow me take a more effective approach to the data analysis.

- **Analysis**

This involved reading the text line by line and taking a three-step approach to the analysis:

- Literal – looking at what people said.
- Interpretative – looking at what people meant.
- Reflexive – what does it all actually mean?

It was hoped that by interacting with the data in this way common themes or patterns could be identified emerging from the data.

To assist the reader and make the transcript references easy to locate, I have assigned 'T1' as the first transcript, 'T2' as the second and so on. There are nine transcripts in total. Each

line of the transcript has been numbered, starting with the number one and moving down in steps of five. This can be seen at the left-hand side of the transcriptions (Appendix 1).

As mentioned, the interviewees have been identified by staff category; line manager (l), a member of a decentralised HR team (d) or a member of Corporate HR (c).

When referencing a particular section of a transcription in the data analysis chapter I have adopted the following approach:

T (Transcription); L/D/C (staff category); P (page); Ls: (the line number)

For example T1,D1,P3,Ls:77-78 refer to the following quote:

“I think I would like to get a little bit more proactive and I’m hoping to get to that stage as the year goes on!”

This quote is available from transcription One, decentralised HR interviewee 1, page three, lines 77 to 78. It is hoped this will facilitate the reader when trying to locate a particular statement made within the transcriptions.

■ Findings

The findings from the data analysis outline what this researcher felt the most salient points of the interviews were.

Data Analysis

It is my intention to look at a number of areas in order to identify the extent to which the decentralisation of the Human Resources Function, and the attempt to devolve HR activities to line managers have impacted on line management, HR Professionals and the Human Resources Function itself. The main areas of concentration were:

- The devolution of HR activities to line managers
- Decentralised HR teams
- The role of Corporate HR

Within these areas a number of themes emerged and I will examine these in the context of the data gathered and current literature on the topic.

Devolution of HR activities to line managers

- **What HR activities have been devolved to the line?**

HR identified the following areas as having been successfully devolved to line managers:

- annual leave
- sick leave reporting
- recruitment
- IR issues

- **Are line managers happy to embrace HR activities as part of their role?**

Most managers spoke of an increase in workload and the difficulties encountered in trying to meet the various demands of their role as a result of the devolution of HR activities to them.

One interviewee (HR) felt that perhaps line managers had been overloaded with work and this should be reviewed.

“I know what comes back to me from the line managers, from being involved with them in training and development, is they do feel aggrieved. They feel that a lot of their time is now taken up with HR work, as they see it not being their work, and that their ‘real work’, as they see it, is getting neglected. I think we have possibly given some line managers too much to do. And I think we need to look at that again.” (T7,C1,P50:Ls:2404-2419)

One line manager spoke of the difficulties experienced in TV IBD:

“I don’t know if managers have taken on their full HR role really. It has been very difficult for them (editors, producers, etc.) because they were people who recruited for their editorial expertise and their knowledge of programming, not in terms of management skills as such and I think it has been a big learning curve.

I acknowledge that people need to learn and they have to be able to take up these other tasks but really that is not their background and now they find, not only do they have to worry about ensuring audience ratings for the programmes, they have to spend considerable time at a pc sanctioning annual leave and this has been a huge, huge learning curve for them.” (T4,L1,P31,Ls:1479-1504)

Other line managers interviewed had similar experiences:

“There is increasingly more and more administrative work involved in this role so it has become much more difficult, and at times the focus can go away from the end product.” (T5,L2,P36,Ls:1755-1757)

“When I first started in my role I suppose the editorial side of the job would have been about 60% of the work and the management side would have been about 40% and they are now more than reversed. But still the most important part of the job is the editorial. You

have to make sure that the output you are responsible for is at the standard that gives News its reputation, that gives us listeners and earns us revenue.” (T6,L3,P42,Ls:2027-2046)

▪ **Did managers feel then HR should be given a priority in their role?**

For the most part, the line managers I interviewed accepted that people management was a very important element of their job and really, it was part of what being a manager was about. It appeared that line managers were of the view that HR was a shared responsibility between themselves and HR.

“I’ve always presumed I’ve had a people management role, apart from the objective of getting the work done. I do lean on HR for advice, I wouldn’t claim to be any expert, but where I do have complications I do come across them and try to get it right.”

(T5,L2,P36,Ls:1734-1738)

“It is very important. At the end of the day the Newsroom is a better place and we do the job better if we have people who are more skilled and who are more motivated by doing the job that they enjoy doing.” (T6,L3,P44,Ls:2106-2114)

“It is key now that managers now do actually manage their area and I think it is essential that they all work to achieve that. I don’t think it’s that difficult once the mindset is changed but it is extra work.” (L1,T4,p33,L1490-1539)

▪ **Did HR feel line managers were happy to take on these responsibilities?**

Some of the comments from HR were as follows:

“Some of them are open to getting more involved and some of them are definitely not! There’s varying degrees of this within the IBD.” (T1,D1,P4,Ls:162-168)

“Some are and some aren’t. I think it will evolve over time because it’s relatively new for them. While they would have been involved in some HR activities before and they are

getting more involved, it does vary from area to area. It is still somewhat of a re-education process and you still have to hand hold them a little bit as well, but I do feel they are more open to taking on that additional responsibility now.” (D1,T1,P4,Ls:162-169)

“In my particular IBD, I would have said, that because of the open door policy that Senior Managers had, and continue to have, they have always carried out a HR function in terms of meeting staff with any issues that the individual has, or even groups may have, without them say, turning into formal IR issues. So they have always worn the HR hat. Also as part of Senior Manager objectives the HR role has become more obvious in that it is now specifically written down but I think that in this particular area it was always a function that they carried out anyway.” (T2,D2,P12,Ls:557-569)

“I don’t know if the word would be happy; I think the word would be that they always would have seen it as part and parcel of what they do as a line manager.” (T2,D2,P12,Ls:577-580)

HR also noted that senior managers fully supported the line in the take up of their HR responsibilities.

“I think some of the line managers do feel yes it is a HR job to be done by HR but I think the senior managers believe it is line management’s responsibility, so senior managers now have a job to convince their line managers to take on this role. We are doing ok but it is taking time.” (T3,D3,P17,Ls:814-820)

- **Encouraging line managers to take up responsibility**

Some HR staff spoke of the difficulty in trying to make line managers aware of the importance of taking up the HR aspects of their role. Some managers seemed to accept this more readily than others:

“At local level there is an ongoing process to make managers aware that they have to take more responsibility. That is time consuming, it is a lengthy process and it is a culture change issue as well. It is very hard to convince editorial managers that they have to take

up more of the responsibilities in dealing with their staff because at the end of the day they see themselves as having an editorial, not a people management role.” (T3,D3,P17,Ls:799-807)

“I think they always would have seen it as part and parcel of what they do because of the nature of broadcasting, maybe news in particular. The Journalist is almost, if not quite, the end product but they are synonymous with the package that they are doing. Therefore, if the Journalist isn’t getting it right, the newsroom isn’t getting it right and on that basis the senior and line managers see, that as part and parcel of getting that package on air, they must deal with any HR issues.” (T2,D2,P12,Ls:578-592)

- **HR as a joint function**

Many of the interviewees viewed HR as more of a joint function between themselves and line managers.

“They do so much and then we advise them – it’s a big learning curve for them because they haven’t been as involved in HR before. (T1,D1,P3,Ls:122-126)

“It is about working in tandem with them, not in opposition, that is the crucial thing – it is about building up relationships and working side by side.” (T3,D3,P18,Ls:850-856)

- **Have line managers received sufficient training and support?**

Most interviewees felt sufficient training had been made available to managers. Many made reference to the recent Management Development training programme that took place this year. (T1,D1,P4,Ls:180-186)

It was felt this course was particularly beneficial to managers as it touched on the areas of employment legislation, performance management, discipline and grievance procedures. (T1,D1,P4,Ls:180-186)

In addition, courses on recruitment and employee relations had been organised by HR in an effort to facilitate line managers in their role. (T1,D1,P4,Ls:172-179)

However, one HR practitioner acknowledged the almost impossibility of training managers for every eventuality and pointed out the lack of specialist support available to managers since the decentralisation of HR:

“I suspect that, like anyone dealing with HR, when a particular issue crops up that you haven’t received training on, you are always going to feel a wee bit at a loss and especially now because there is no expert on that area. The loss would feel somewhat greater because even if they go to the HR person in their IBD that person might not be an expert either.”

(T2,D2,P13,Ls:604-610)

One manager felt the only way to gain the relevant skills and knowledge for the job was through experience.

“In terms of the HR issues I think part of it is the experience of being in the job a long time, and dealing with difficult issues and getting them right and sometimes getting them wrong and learning from the ones where you make the mistakes and moving on.” (T6,L3,P44,Ls:2118-2129)

Another manager acknowledged the level of availability of training in RTE but felt there were time pressures on managers and this impacted on their ability to put any learning into action.

“I actually think they have (received sufficient training), but you know you come back and in the busy work environment the way everything goes, you have to find the time to do it and then if you don’t it becomes a mountain to climb and you never get around to it.”

(T4,L1,P32,Ls:1531-1539)

One interviewee made the point that although sufficient training was made available to line managers there was “nowhere for them to go as a resource to get stuff, there’s nothing for

them. Ok they can make a phonecall but they should be able to get onto an intranet site – there should be a Management Information System there that outlines the procedures for hiring staff, granting pay increases, renewing contracts and so on, particularly for new managers coming in as there is no induction training course. I know the decentralised IBD gives them a run down of their staff but it is very limited.

I think managers would feel more comfortable if they had more information there – even textbook stuff on how to do a review. People may come in from the private sector where pay reviews happen just once a year so it may be a very different experience coming in here and getting used to the practices.” (T8,C2,P56,Ls:2679-2689)

Findings

The main themes that emerged from this analysis were:

- **Mixed response from managers in relation to devolution**

The extent to which HR activities have been successfully devolved to line managers is not consistent across the organisation.

The matter of trying to get line managers to take ownership of the issues is very much dependant on the individual manager and on whether or not, he or she valued the people management aspect of his/her role. News IBD, for example, was highlighted as an area that realised the importance of a good approach to people management and as a result line management seemed happier to take on the people management aspects of their role.

There was some difficulty it seemed, in getting staff, whose background was more of a technical rather than managerial nature, to accept the people management responsibilities of their role. This was attributed to the fact that they were hired for their technical or operational expertise, as opposed to managerial experience.

Guest, as cited in Torrington and Hall (1998:65) highlights how important it is for line managers to “recognise the importance of the human resource and the need for them to engage in practices, which reflect this understanding.”

- **Feeling of being over-worked rather than feeling of empowerment**

None of the managers I spoke to felt particularly liberated by having an increased responsibility for HR activities. Therefore, it wasn't necessarily a case of managers feeling more empowered by taking on extra HR responsibilities but more of an acknowledgement by them that it was part and parcel of the role of being a manager.

Many had difficulty dividing their time between their responsibilities. Some managers felt there was conflict between them getting the 'day job' done and also finding the time to take on their additional roles. (Sec T4,L1,P31,Ls:1493-1498; T6,L3,P42,Ls:2028-2050)

Holden and Roberts, as cited in Torrington and Hall (1998:65) warned, "when the pressure is on (managers) 'luxuries' like HRM are the things that get lost."

Decentralised HR Teams

▪ **The Advantages**

When asked to outline how they felt about working in a **decentralised HR team** some of the advantages identified were:

“You certainly get a better sense of what’s going on in the business unit now that you are working in. I think it makes sense to report in to the Managing Director of that area and I mean they have a respect for what HR do as well and I have discovered that! Before I wasn’t too sure but they do have. They do look to HR for advice and everything else. Sometimes they take it and sometimes they don’t. But I think there is a healthier relationship there now and I think it is good to actually report to the MD of the area. I certainly have a greater sense of what I’m doing myself by having that reporting line.”

(T1,D1,P2, Ls:84-91)

“I suppose you get a fuller picture in terms of the HR function itself. Now you are dealing with everything essentially from beginning to end; those issues where you would have previously had experts so in that sense I suppose it is a more rounded function.”

(T2,D2,P9, Ls:406-413)

“I think it is great to be on the ground, it gives you a great sense of the business. You meet people and you are interacting in a different way, you’re not just caught up in this one little group in the centre that is cocooned from everyone else in the business. You get an understanding of the issues, which means that if you do have to go to Corporate HR and argue the issue from the business end of it you have a better understanding of it and really that is what it is all about. It is about understanding what the product and the business is, knowing the people who are the decision makers and influencing their decisions as best you can and being able to talk their talk which we were never able to do in the past. So that is a very good benefit.”

(T3,D3, P20, Ls:941-950)

“The advantages of decentralising the function have probably been that they have helped focus the IBD and focus HR on the business of the IBD. It has allowed for HR to be nearer to the people, perhaps more accessible to the people, because they are located in the area and people can go to them and people can deal with them and people can get to know them better and from that point of view it is very good.” (T9,C3,P64,Ls:3053-3063)

When asked what the particular **benefits of having a decentralised HR team were for them**, **managers** had the following to say:

“I suppose at the beginning I was kind of ‘wait and see’. But absolutely I think it works much better. I don’t know whether it saves the organisation any money but I think it has made for a much more efficient way of doing the business.

It’s the point of contact, but it is also the level of expertise that is built up in that you have somebody who is dealing on a regular basis with the issues that are common to the News Division so therefore they have a greater understanding.

You didn’t have the follow through that you do now, you didn’t have the people who fully understood exactly why we do things the way we do. It’s much better now when you know who the person is and when the person is part of your division and who takes responsibility for things that in the past were probably shared between two or three different people rather than having one person focussed on them.” (T6,L3,P41,Ls:1980-1995)

“I think we all have to learn about what HR can do for us. I think HR is key and I think it should be visible. And I think it is a very good idea having it here and I think that is important but I think it can work better. But there has been a lot going on in TV so I suppose you have to give it time as well. (T4,L1,P33,Ls:1585-1596)

▪ **The Disadvantages**

A number of disadvantages were highlighted also.

“The downside is twofold: You don’t have access to the same level of expertise so you are going out, and to a greater or lesser extent and having to re-invent the wheel when previously there would have been someone who would have had ready-made wheels!

And equally you are never going to become an expert on a particular topic because one, you just don’t have the resources and two, you just aren’t doing it with the same level of frequency. So even though you now have re-invented the wheel for a particular item, you may not do that item again for another twelve to eighteen months and while you are not quite back to square one you are definitely only on square three or four so I suppose those are the main disadvantages. (T2,D2,P9,Ls:413-421397-487)

“It is very difficult to work in the line because you have to have that total overall generalist approach but you don’t have time to get it.” (T3,D3,P20,Ls:934-937)

“One of the disadvantages for the organisation would definitely have to be **the loss of expertise** – now that is for a couple of reasons, not only was there decentralisation there was also a downsizing factor.

Duplication, almost inevitable in that there is a high end administrative function in all of the IBD’s. If you added up all those decentralised staff numbers would they be greater than the previously centralised HR function? I feel, though that decentralisation as a whole, the benefits outweigh the negatives.” (T2,D2,P16,Ls:751-773)

“Now the disadvantages probably have to do with the fact that a group of people working together on the same thing can hold a collection of experience, knowledge and information and they can bounce off each other and this can permeate throughout rather than having to

ring around for the answers – I think you lose that sense of specialism and teamwork.”

(T9,C3,P64,Ls:3065-3071)

▪ **Direct reporting relationship to the IBD**

Decentralised staff were asked to describe what the difference was in reporting into their IBD as opposed to reporting to the Director of Human Resources. Many were happy to report directly to the IBD as they felt they were all working towards a common goal.

“The difference in reporting into Radio as opposed to reporting into HR is that you are part of the business in radio, you are regarded as the key person dealing with HR issues in radio. I think it is good in the sense that you have more autonomy to be able to push things in the way that you would like to see them being pushed. Ultimately if I am going to be responsible for HR in this area then I feel I should have a say in how it’s going to be run.”

(T3,D3,P21,Ls:998-1003)

“With Managing Director of News you are speaking much more of a **common language**. With central HR it is much more of a persuasion, even on just practicalities. You always had to have this big conversation.” (T2,D2,P15,Ls:708-730)

▪ **Training for the Decentralised Teams**

HR were also asked if they felt they had been given sufficient training and time to get up to speed for this new role.

“Well I came from a specialised area in Employee Relations where I knew very little about anything else. So when I came over there was a very steep learning curve. When I took on the decentralised HR role it brought with it a completely different role with a completely different focus but it was also implemented at the same time as downsizing, the implementation of PeopleSoft, negotiation of the organisational transformation agreement so there was a lot of activity at that one particular time. This made it quite difficult and it

didn't give the teams an awful lot of time to bed in. It was more about keeping your head above water at the time rather than developing the skills of the team. (T3,D3,P24,Ls:1136-1147)

“It was just learn it as you go along - you had three courses to pick from and that was it... With us in TV, everything was new and you were in the line at that stage and people were busier and there was a lot more pressure and you were basically trying to learn your role from scratch and then there was no time to do training courses. You were just told you were moving and you were moving and you were to do everything and that was it. For people who worked in one particular area only that was a huge learning curve.”

(T8,C2,P57,Ls:2715-2730)

Findings

■ Pros vs. Cons

It is difficult to come to any firm conclusion on whether or not this has been a more successful move for the decentralised HR practitioner.

Certainly management and HR are in agreement that the move has been of benefit to the IBD in which the teams are now located, but how has this move impacted on the HR professional?

Many expressed concern over the lack of relevant skills they now had given their move into a more consultative role.

Others mentioned the loss of expertise in specific areas of HR (e.g. welfare, employee relations). Some of the reasons for this loss of expertise was attributed to the large scale downsizing that took place in RTÉ over the past number of years but others also attributed it to the fact that because 'like minded professionals' were no longer located together, they had lost the level of specialism once held within a centralised function.

The Role of Corporate HR

When asked what their **understanding of the Role of Corporate HR** was line managers gave a number of similar responses and described it as being a

“guidance role to the other Divisions.” (T5,L2,P35,LS:1694)

“emanating from Corporate HR are the policies and future HR policies.” (L1,T4,P32,LS:1443-1444)

One manager admitted that she did not “know much about what Corporate HR do.”

(T4,L1,P30,LS:1428) while another stated;

“Frankly I am a little mystified – I know very little! I suppose that is one of the effects of having a HR presence in the Division. That’s the person (decentralised HR) who I would have all my dealings with.” (T6,L3,P42,LS:2001-2010)

Farrell’s research, as cited in Torrington and Hall (1998:85), makes reference to this and he found “line managers were much clearer about what to expect from the departmental unit than from the central unit,” and as a result, “it was the local HR officers who were seen to add value while the central unit appeared to be in ‘no man’s land’.”

Decentralised HR sounded a little clearer, with one decentralised HR member describing the role as follows;

“I suppose it is all the things that you would sort of expect. It is to devise overall strategy and then develop overall policy to ensure consistency of practices and local policies throughout the organisation.” (T2,D2,P14,LS:639-642)

Corporate HR had very differing opinions and not everyone was clear on what Corporate HR’s role is. Most, it seemed, were aware of what it **should** be doing but weren’t as sure about what it **was** doing at present.

“... to drive policy, to ensure that there is consistency in HR, throughout the IBD’s and in Corporate HR, to keep abreast of legislation, to manage the PeopleSoft system, to deal with performance review in relation to managers, to provide coaching and advice, to ensure the policy and procedures manual is updated and that people are aware of it.”

(T9,C3,P59,Ls:2809-2820)

“I think it’s unclear. I think the centre has been downgraded and I think its role is unclear and I think this needs to be worked out. For the moment what it’s doing is the regulatory stuff such as Health and Safety and Pensions, some Industrial Relations, some Training and Development that can best be done from the Centre such as Management Development. But I think the Jury is out on that; the role seems to be unclear. (T7,C1,P47,Ls:2255-2264)

“Well that is a very good question! (laughs) I suppose it is to maintain standards and consistencies across the IBD’s. Well that is the aim – or where the focus **should** be.”

(T8,C2,P53,Ls:2512-2513)

Staff were also asked if they felt there was a **need for a central HR Function**.

Decentralised HR felt a Corporate HR presence was essential so that RTE would retain

“a corporate focus that can ensure consistency in the policies and make sure that we are all doing the same things.” (T1,D1,P5,Ls:236-237)

“If you have people going off on solo runs sometimes they can have an impact elsewhere. Corporate HR really needs to keep an eye on what the decentralised teams are doing to make sure that if we do something over here it is not going to have an adverse effect anywhere else in the organisation. That is one of the key roles of Corporate HR – Corporate Guidance, Corporate Governance and all of that and it is an important part.”

(T3,D3,P21-22,Ls:1023-1034)

However while acknowledging a need for Corporate HR the same Decentralised HR staff member also stated;

“There are restrictions and constraints on policies and I acknowledge that, but essentially I have very little need for Corporate HR when you think about it. We have our manuals and guidelines and once we work within those I think it is fine. I think the way the Corporate Centre is at the moment I think it imposes restrictions on me that I sometimes don’t want to have.” (T3,D3,P21,Ls:1004-1009)

Line Management also acknowledged the need for a central HR presence.

“... there has to be some kind of a machine to make sure that everything is consistent throughout the organisation – how it works I don’t know but yes I can see the need for it.” (T6,L3,P42,Ls:2020-2022)

“What would happen without it is that we’d all go off in various different directions and that would actually lead to trouble further down the line at some point.” (T5,L2,P36,Ls:1715-1716)

“I think it is such a key area (HR) for any company and I think the Managing Directors of the various IBD’s of this world are dealing with their own areas in a specific way and they need HR in that particular way and while I think HR **can** operate within each division and deal with the issues, I think HR is a very specific area in its own right so I **do** think it is very important for them to have that interaction with Corporate HR.” (T4,L1,P30,Ls:1447-1460)

Central HR made reference to the need for a “co-ordinating role”, for the simple fact that issues like Industrial Relations need to be dealt with from an organisation wide perspective as well as locally because “the Unions are organisation wide, they don’t just live within IBD’s.” (T7,C1,P48,Ls:2279-2283)

This manager also felt it was important that Corporate HR provided a monitoring type role:

“It’s as if the organisation doesn’t trust, if I can use that term, doesn’t trust the individual IBD’s totally to go their own way and so they still need a restraining hand on them now and again and I would imagine that’s fairly common out there.” (T7,C1,P48,Ls:2289-2293)

Findings

Although there was some confusion over what Corporate HR **actually** does, there was general consensus on what people felt Corporate HR **should** be involved in, with everyone acknowledging a continuing need for the presence of a central HR function into the future.

(see T3,D3, P42,Ls:1014-1030)

I wish to review my findings by referring to the various themes that emerged during the course of my analysis of the interview data.

▪ **Clarity**

Most interviewees felt there was a certain lack of clarity surrounding the role of Corporate HR and as one Corporate HR staff member pointed out the goalposts for this function seemed to keep shifting.

“The role was never defined. At one stage it was felt that Corporate HR was eventually going to disappear and then it kind of swung back that Corporate HR should have some level of control over the teams but there is nothing in place to say what (Corporate) HR is about.” (T8,C2,P55,Ls:2639-2643)

Varying opinion also exists on what the role of Corporate HR should be and the optimum level of involvement required between Corporate and Decentralised HR. Decentralised HR stressed the need for autonomy when dealing with local issues,

“There are elements of support which is excellent, which you’ll never regret having but again there are also restrictive controls there which can really annoy you when you are in the line because again you have that understanding of the business that they don’t.” (T3,D3, P25,Ls:1188-1196)

while Corporate HR felt they needed a greater level of influence over the decentralised HR teams to ensure consistency of approach throughout RTÉ.

However, given the direct reporting relationship decentralised HR have with the Managing Director of their IBD and only the existence of a dotted line reporting relationship back to Corporate HR, Corporate HR felt very limited in the extent to which they could exercise any authority over the decentralised HR teams. (T8,C2, P55,Ls:2615-2650)

This concurs with evidence from the literature review in which Farrell's research (as cited in Torrington and Hall 1998:86) found: "In many cases the professionals in central HR are reduced to being 'auditors' and 'monitors' of practices in the line."

"Central HR is isolated and marginalised to such an extent that the departmental agenda prevails and Central HR is unable to have any impact on the establishment". (Torrington and Hall, 1998:87)

▪ **Consistency of approach across the organisation**

The need to ensure consistency in our approach to the various HR processes, policies and procedures within RTE was one of the most common themes that emerged when discussing the role of Corporate HR. (T5,L2,P25,Ls:1704-1706)

Corporate HR Professionals felt there was cause for concern mainly in the areas of performance management and reward systems and in relation to the recording of data on PeopleSoft. (see T8,C2,P55,Ls:2624-2634; T7,C1,P48,Ls:2299-22308; T9,C3,P60,Ls:2883-2900)

Many also argued in favour of a central retention of a number of processes including Management Development.

"Take the recent management training programme, I think that is good that it is done by Corporate HR – It is good to have training that is consistent across the board instead of everyone going off and doing their own especially because managers can move from area to area within the organisation." (T3,D3,P22,Ls:1032-1034)

▪ **Effectiveness of Communication between Corporate and Decentralised HR.**

Interviewees, for the most part felt there was a lack of formality in relation to communication and information sharing between HR, which again led to inconsistencies being allowed to permeate throughout the organisation.

Although there were weekly 'Heads of HR' meetings there was little perceived value to be gained from attending these meetings with the belief by some that there was no real 'sharing' of information taking place.

Currently there is no formal mechanism to enable the feeding down of information from the Heads of HR to the rest of the members in the HR team. (T9,C3, P61, Ls:2925-2940)

As mentioned in the literature review chapter Torrington and Hall (1998:86-87) found there is a recognised need for a two way flow of information and that "if personnel specialists are not willing to share information the organisation will miss out in the long term."

Conclusions

Although a lot of ground was covered in the research it was not within the scope of this project to cover all the areas discussed. I would like to touch on just a few points in this chapter.

Devolution of HR responsibilities to line managers

Managers, for the most part, have accepted the need for them to take on more of the responsibility for HR in their area. It is such an important area that it cannot be left solely to the HR practitioners in the organisation.

There is not necessarily a feeling of empowerment amongst line managers in RTÉ but there is a general acceptance of the need to incorporate human resource responsibilities into their role.

HR, for their part, seem happy to give additional responsibility to line managers but both parties acknowledge it is very much a joint effort between them and HR; that it is now a shared responsibility between HR and line managers. Senior management within the organisation support this view.

It is important to point out that take up of HR responsibilities by line management is very much dependant on the individual manager but the culture of the area within which the manager operates does seem to influence this. It would seem that managers in areas with a previously strong focus on people management are most likely to take on additional HR responsibilities.

Managers do feel overworked at present and there seems to be a strong case for reviewing this and the possible overlap in responsibilities between line management and Human Resources. It is important that this issue be addressed because if it is allowed to continue it

may result in HR issues being pushed to the bottom of the pile, or being forgotten about by managers, which would be detrimental for the organisation.

Decentralised HR Teams

When analysing the data in relation to this area two key questions emerged.

- **Do people view decentralised HR as a more successful structure?**

HR felt they were now more fully integrated into the business as a direct result of decentralisation. It has helped them tailor local HR strategies to meet specific business needs. The teams felt they had a greater appreciation of the business itself and appreciated the fact that they were now able to speak a 'common language' with other colleagues in the IBD.

Managers admitted they were a little apprehensive of the move at first, but most feel it is very beneficial to have a dedicated HR team physically present in their IBD. They now see the advantages of having one point of contact and feel a greater body of 'local business' knowledge is being built up by the decentralised HR teams.

All in all it appears to be generally accepted by most that this is a more successful structure for HR.

- **Are HR prepared for the new role they have to play?**

Most HR professionals agree that very little thought was put into the placement of the various HR practitioners in the line. This was due to a number of reasons (e.g. downsizing) and as a result there is a skills gap within some of the IBD's.

In addition, HR are being expected to take on a more advisory and consultative role within the IBD's and many feel they have not had the time to acquire these new skills. Torrington and Hall, (1998:71) rightly point out "consultancy and facilitation skills are a distinct set of complex skills which can not be 'picked up as you go'."

There has been a strong emphasis on management development training over the past number of months. I would now strongly recommend that HR conduct a skills audit of HR staff to identify the particular skills gaps that have been mentioned in the interview transcripts. A training plan should then be outlined for each member as part of his or her objectives for the next twelve months.

Corporate HR

The debate on the need to retain a central HR function when a decentralised HR function also exists is ambiguous. There are very good arguments in favour of, but also against the need to retain a central function.

Of course the benefits are that a level of consistency is retained throughout the organisation, and that certain standards exist, for example, which everyone throughout the organisation is measured against.

In spite of these benefits there are some downsides;

- How is it possible to have a truly decentralised HR function if the HR teams are required to refer back to Corporate HR?
- How do you have corporate wide policies, practices and training yet at the same time have a system in place which promotes the ‘tailoring’ of practices to meet local needs?
- Is this not in some way diminishing the benefits of having a decentralised HR presence?

As some of the interviewees very aptly state:

“On the one hand there’s no point in having decentralisation and all the costs involved in that if you always retain a heavy central core. On the other hand there’s no point in having decentralisation if you lose the benefits of having a co-ordinating role for the centre so I think it’s a question of trade offs.” (T7,C1,P547,ls:2271-2293)

For the moment at least, however, it seems the benefits of retaining a Corporate HR function outweigh the disadvantages, from RTE’s point of view.

“It would be different if you were definitely a completely separate company but when you have other sections within one company I think we do need that link back.” (T4,L1,P30,Ls:1466-1470)

“.. still the centre hasn't died and looks like it won't fade away and as far as I can tell I think that is the feeling of the Director General as well. He sees a role for the centre. It's an interesting point.” (T7,L1,P48,Ls:2289-2290)

However, to make the role more effective there is definitely a case for a clearer definition of the role; strong leadership from the new Director of Human Resources to help raise the profile of the centre and to give it status within the organisation, (one of the setbacks for Corporate HR may be that they have not had a Director of Human Resources for some time) and a more formalised and effective approach to communication and information sharing throughout HR.

In addition, Corporate HR need to adopt a more strategic approach to Human Resources so that they can be seen to add value to RTE. The literature makes reference to the fact that decentralisation and devolution help HR move from an operational to a more strategic role. This has not happened for HR in RTE yet. They are still very much involved at the operational level with many feeling so bogged down in this work they can't get to the more high level aspects of their job.

In conclusion RTE has witnessed a lot of change over the past number of years. There are advantages and disadvantages to the approach they have adopted in relation to the Human Resources Function. Admittedly, it may not be the most cost effective approach but most are of the opinion that the benefits outweigh the negativities, and that overall it is a more efficient approach to Human Resources.

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Appendix 1

Transcript of interview with D1

5 **T: To what extent do you feel there has been a deliberate policy to decentralise HR to the line?**

D1: Well I feel it was very much driven from Corporate HR initially and it happened very quickly but there definitely was a policy there to decentralise to the different IBD's.

10

T: Who do you think was the main driving force behind this restructuring?

D1: I think it was top management here and a lot of it was to do with headcount at the time and just devolving the service into the IBD's.

15

T: And how would you describe the structure that is place now?

D1: There are very distinctive IBD's in place now and within those they have their dedicated HR teams (just looking at this from HR's point of view) so the roles are more defined I think and HR is providing a more complete service in the teams to the IBD.

20

T: From a personal point of view what is your reaction to working in the line and opposed to working in a centralized HR structure?

D1: Ok from my own point of view I've been working in the IBD for just the past six months and prior to that I was in corporate – my role has changed completely in those few months – I am much more involved in the whole HR function as opposed to being involved in PeopleSoft and the processes side of things before that so definitely dealing with line managers, providing the whole HR service really to line managers and staff within the IBD so it has changed a completely.

30

T: What do you see as your priority now that you have decentralized? (support org, ibd or corporate hr goals)

D1: For me the focus is on providing a HR service to senior and line managers and the staff within the IBD's. Now obviously that's driven from Corporate HR aswell and there's a link in there but it's very much to do with providing a HR service to staff and management within the IBD.

35

40 **T: Which of these activities would you spend most of your time on?**

T: HR Administration

D1: Yes I do – probably not as much now because there's more of us involved in the function but I do certainly do an amount of administration.

45

T: Updating your own HR knowledge?

50 D1: Not as much as I'd like to

T: Providing support for line managers?

55 D1: Yea a good part of my time – I would say 60 – 70% of my time would involve that.

T: Providing specialist HR input to wider business issues?

60 D1: A very small percentage.. with Corporate HR I would be involved in discussing issues like fte's in headcounts or some of the changes like that .. issues in relation to contracts... smaller issues

T: Developing HR strategy and policies.

65 D1: It's corporate really but I have been looking, with my own manager at plans for the future in relation to recruitment and our whole way we issue contracts and everything else and moving that forward – I don't know if that's what you mean.

T: Do you feel this is how your time is best spent or divided up?
70 **Anything you'd like to change about how you divide your time.**

75 D1: I think I would like to get a little bit more proactive and I'm hoping to get to that stage as the year goes on! Because it's quite a new structure within the TV IBD with regards to staffing and everything else and the division of responsibilities and I certainly would like to get a bit more proactive – have a more forward looking approach rather than just dealing with retrospective stuff so that's what I would like to do. But in saying that some of the other elements have to be carried out as well but it would be just a matter of reducing the focus on them slightly.

80 **T: What has been the difference for you between reporting to Head of TV IBD as opposed to reporting directly to Director of Human Resources? Pull – harder to keep emphasis on HR in the line.**

85 D1: Well I think the devolvement of HR for me anyway you certainly get a better sense of what's going on in the business unit now that you are working in and I think it makes sense to report in to the Managing Director of that area and I mean they have a respect for what HR do as well and I have discovered that! Before I wasn't too sure but they do have and they do look to HR for advice and everything else .. sometimes they take it and sometimes they don't. But I think there is a healthier relationship there now and I think it is good to actually report to the MD of the area. I certainly have a greater
90 sense of what I'm doing myself by having that reporting line.

T: Do you feel you have a greater sense of the business needs since you decentralized?

95 D1: Absolutely. Yea.

T: What effect has this move had on your role? Some people say they are more empowered because as you say they feel more part of the business since decentralisation while others may feel they have lost a certain amount of control.

D1: Well I think because in our area and it is the biggest IBD as well- we have seven people in the HR team now and it has just been restructured as well so it's taking shape but I think we have a greater sense of what we are about and for myself as well I have a greater sense of what HR and the role that we play within the IBD and that is definitely a good thing.

T: What are your thoughts on moving from a specialist to a more generalist role. Do you feel like more or less of a professional in your field – in other words negative impact on your role?

D1: I don't think it's a negative thing at all –especially for myself because the background was very much peoplesoft orientated for the past two years and now I have a better sense of my role, what I am doing and what I should be doing now and it's within the wider HR function and because you can get drawn into so many different issues and so many different debates that go on within the HR function and with line managers and just have a better idea of what it's all about and therefore working as a generalist, for me, has definitely been a better move.

T: To what extent have HR activities been devolved to the line?

D1: Well I think the most obvious ones are the annual leave and sick leave reporting and peoplesoft has driven that. I think for me I've certainly built up better relationships with line managers here and it's more of a joint function between us. They do so much and then we advise them – it's a big learning curve for them because they haven't been as involved in HR before and certainly some of them are open to getting more involved and some of them are definitely not! There's varying degrees of this within the IBD.

T: Any other areas.

D1: Yea – the managers; people manager's especially are involved in any of the recruitment issues, drafting up ads and whatever else, they're involved in those, they sit on the interview boards, IR issues – IR specialist in TV would liaise with managers in relation to this – even looking at the issue of renewing contracts etc. they would be involved in all that.

T: What effect has the decentralization of HR had on line managers in your IBD do you think?

D1: I think they realize more what HR does and doesn't do and because you have a closer relationship with them because before we would have been more removed – we were in a different building – we were up in the admin block and we had different people looking after different areas and very often you didn't even get to meet managers or get involved with them and there's a greater appreciation from their point

of view and from ours of what goes on and they see where we're coming from now, well some do and some don't but generally there is a better understanding there.

150 **T: And do you think they appreciate having one person there as a point of contact that follows through on all the issues in their area?**

D1: Because we've restructured recently I got in touch with all the senior managers and managers at all levels to let them know who their contact person was in the team
155 and you know we got very good response from that and we've started to meet with the managers as well just to go through and see where they have problems and what they want done and what's not been done or whatever and we got great response from that as they are happy to have that initial contact person there for them.

160 **T: Are managers happy to accept responsibility for HR activities?**

D1: Some are and some aren't and I think it will evolve over time as well because it's relatively new for them I think – while they would have been involved in some HR activities before and they are getting more involved but it does vary from area to area
165 and it is still somewhat of a re-education process and you still have to hand hold them a little bit as well while you are going through a transitional period but I do feel they are more open to taking on that additional responsibility now.

T: And do you feel they have received appropriate / sufficient training and support?
170

D1: Well I think for example, if we take interviews as an example, certainly beforehand there would have been managers who sat on boards and they really wouldn't have been familiar with the guidelines and freedom of information or the questions they
175 should or shouldn't ask but it's something we are addressing now through the training manager. If a manager is due to sit on an interview board now and hasn't done so before we do give them a familiarization course – a few hours with an external expert in the area which is good and it's great even for HR to do it just as a refresher. That's just one part of it.

180 A management training course has been run by Corporate HR as well which covers issues on managing staff – I think they have been of great use as it touched on legislation, touched on performance management, they've covered discipline and grievance and all that and the response from that seems to be quite positive, it probably just needs to be rolled out a bit more so that more managers can do it. And there's also
185 been negotiating skills courses which some managers, especially in the operations side have gone on so I think it's improving.

T: Do you feel they are rewarded in any way for taking on the HR aspects of the job?
190

D1: Not that I'm aware of in monetary value but it puts them in a better position just from their own development and performance management because they are now more capable of dealing with issues directly so but not monetary value.

195

T: What do you think line managers view as your role within the IBD?

D1: Expectations?

200 I think they see they see the role as very much an advisory and facilitatory role and providing information even on the minor issues to legislation etc. They certainly look for reports on their staff. I mean some of them would definitely like to see us looking after the annual leave and sick leave but that's just a transition period but more than less managers are happy to engage in that.

205

T: How do you ensure there is a continued focus on HR issues in your IBD? (part of business plan)

D1: Well we don't have an overall strategy for the IBD so that makes it a bit
210 difficult. Well I think there should be an overall plan which cascades down and everything is feeding into that as well but I think within the management performance development system that's kind of assumed that role in a certain way; that managers goals and objectives are set out and a lot of those relate to HR issues so that in a way helps tie HR issues a little bit back to the overall business plan.

215

T: What effect do you think your presence has had on employees in the line?

D1: Because there's seven of us people don't feel limited in who they can go to as
220 much as say some of the IBD's who have only two HR staff. For us we certainly have a lot of people call into us and phonecalls with people looking for advice on a range of issues so I think it's good for them to know that we're there but I haven't got any kind of feedback from them that there's any difficulty as such.

T: And do you think that employees in your IBD are aware that you are their dedicated HR team?
225

D1: I think that most of them are – but maybe some of the people that work different shift and who don't work the normal 9-5 day might find it harder to get in touch with HR or be less aware of who their HR team are. I think by and large they are aware of us
230 though.

T: At present what is the role and focus of Corporate HR?

D1: Well I think it is essential that Corporate HR is there. When you have five or six
235 IBD's it's very easy for everyone to go off and do what they want to do unless you have a corporate focus there that can ensure consistency in the policies and make sure that we are all doing the same things.

And it's very much as an advisory role for HR people for us to refer to on issues like IR or recruitment issues – I think it is essential to have that unit there.

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T: Dotted line reporting structure back to the Director of HR – How strong do you feel that line is?

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T1

D1: I don't feel it is as strong as it should be. I feel very much that my reporting line is to the Managing Director, Television. And it's probably at a higher level but I don't feel it's that strong at all and I feel it needs to be stronger because sometimes it's the case that a decision is made that the Managing Director, Television might sign off on something which Corporate HR mightn't be aware of or might have a difficulty with and then which do way are you going to go and often it goes with the decision of the Managing Director, Television. And I don't know if that's always the best.

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T: So for you, you feel the link back should be stronger?

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D1: I think it should be stronger, yea.

T: Do you feel line and Corporate HR need to have a good level of interaction with each other?

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D1: I think for most of the day to day transactions that go on we are pretty much ok in that but I definitely think that there should be fortnightly meetings or a get together of Corporate HR and the IBD's and if there are any new policies that come in or changes to PeopleSoft or the way we do contracts just to ensure that everyone is consistent in what we do and I don't know if that consistency is there at the minute, I don't think so really, definitely not in some aspects anyway so it's to police that really and ensure it's not the case.

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T: And do you think that up until now the cross divisional communication and information sharing between HR has been effective or do you think there is a need to improve on that?

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D1: I think it's quite informal you know and you can pick up the phone and talk to anyone in the various IBD's but I suppose it's where you have a problem, you talk to someone and make a decision on that, that maybe that should be recorded somewhere so that people are aware of it going forward that this is the way we went on that particular issue in case they encounter the same issue in the future but currently what is in place is very informal and maybe it should be formalized a bit more.

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T: And do you think that Corporate HR should have a policing function or should they just set guidelines which it is then up to decentralized HR to follow?

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D1: Ideally it should be a matter of having the guidelines there and just adhering to those but we, by and large as HR Professionals are happy enough to go along with these guidelines but where you tend to encounter difficulties is with line managers and I mean really HR should be strong enough to ensure we implement what is right but it is not always the case and I think that is why there should be a stronger link back into Corporate HR. Initially anyway until we get to the stage where people are more compliant but I feel that in this organisation at the minute we do need that.

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T: What have been the advantages and disadvantages for the organization of this changed structure?

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D1: I think the advantages definitely are that the IBD's have their dedicated services there and people get to know the business of the IBD and their requirements which is good.

300 I think the disadvantage may have been that beforehand the functions would have been split up between a group of people who were specialists in a particular field and now that they are in the IBD's they are required to take on a more generalist role so there might have been a gap in the training there and you might have lost out on some skills as well because I suppose people didn't have all the skill-sets that were required but that has probably evolved over time now as well but initially at the time it happened that
305 may have been a problem.

Apart from that I am not sure, perhaps opportunities wise if you are in a smaller IBD the opportunities for movement might be a bit more limited.

310 **T: And do you think overall it has been a successful move for RTE?**

D1: I think it hasn't been fully successful yet – I think there are – I definitely think it's a good thing now - If you'd asked me about a year or two years ago I wouldn't have been as sure but having worked here now for the past six months I definitely think it's
315 good for the IBD's as a whole to have their dedicated services; you get to know the business a lot better; you get to build up your relationships, you're meeting people day to day which you didn't before because even physically you were very much removed from what was going on and I think that has been a positive move but I suppose things need to just move on a bit more now.

320 **T: Do you think there's a fear that decentralised IBD's lose sight of the overall corporate aims – that one of the fears is that they will just 'go native'?**

D1: I suppose it depends on what level you are operating on as well – from say
325 senior management point of view I am sure they are very much keyed into the corporate goals and what we should be doing and everything else but if you bring it down the line further just even to an individual level I don't even know fully what the corporate goals are fully to be honest! Which is a very hard thing for people on the ground to have an input into them then!

330 Interview ends.

Transcript of Interview with D2

335 **T: To what extent has there been a deliberate policy to devolve HR activities to the line? – Referred to as D2**

D2: Well I suppose I mean there was a corporate policy that stems from the strategic framework document which requires RTE to be more transparent and accountable and efficient and arising out of that policy it was decided that HR along with the other
 340 functions would be devolved so yes in that sense there would have been a deliberate policy that it would be devolved to the line in the sense that it would be a decentralised function but following on from that, that it would actually move down into the line that I suppose would be part and parcel of that to a greater or lesser extent. I mean I don't
 345 think you can say that HR have been devolved to the line in the sense that there is still a distinct HR team and while yes line managers are now expected to take a more active role in the management of their staff and there have been training courses put in place, for example the people management course that managers go on for a week – anyone who has people management functions to perform. As I say that's kind of then
 350 following through in terms of the policy to devolve to the line. But it only I would say it devolves so far in that a line manager cannot decide himself or herself that they would like to recruit more staff for example, or that they would like to change a work practice – I mean it's not within their power to just go ahead and do that – they still have to work with their own HR team for any issues that are more than just the day to day issues so it
 355 would be more I'd say a devolvment in terms of day to day management issues as opposed to the bigger issues where I would say it is still the role of the HR team to both drive and implement those.

T: Who or what has been the driving force behind the restructuring in RTE and I am referring specifically to decentralisation here?
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D2: Well I suppose it goes back to my previous answer. I suppose the driving force stems from two things; once again the strategic framework and the need for transparency etc but also I think that even if that particular framework was not in place I
 365 think RTE would have moved anyway towards a more decentralised function and I suppose to a greater or lesser extent the MD of Organisation and Development at the time would have had a strong view and in turn the then Director of Personnel would also I think have had strong views in terms of decentralising the function into individual areas.

T: Why do you think they decided that decentralisation was the best way forward for this particular company?
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D2: I think there is a time and a tide for all of these things in that decentralisation if
 375 not quite the flavour of the month, is definitely one of the things out there. All of these things have a cycle. A number of companies have followed the decentralisation route and are now looking at recentralising and who is to say that RTE won't go the same way but I think there's a definite kind of flow to these things that it becomes the popular way of doing business and there would be a lot of documents and a lot of seminars and
 380 a lot of just thinking by academics on the benefits of decentralisation so

I think it becomes a topic of conversation. Now how much practical study would have been done on this I have no idea. But I suppose even if there was the thinking of doing it the strategic framework made it essential that it had to be done anyway. So I think it's a combination of those factors.

T: Would like to establish how your role has changed since decentralisation – From a personal point of view what is your reaction to working with the line?

D2: Well I suppose that is a difficult one to answer from a personal perspective in that prior to decentralisation I wouldn't have been working in the news function anyway. Now when we were 'gifted' to the newsroom the decentralisation had already begun at that stage so I suppose the big difference was that say prior to decentralisation was that;

I was working in a different area.

This would be of more relevance – while the area I was working for prior to that I would have dealt with all the issues other than I suppose the IR which was then a central function really, we wouldn't have dealt with sick leave and we wouldn't have dealt with pensions so there would have been 'experts' dealing with those areas. Now with the decentralisation I suppose it was almost a by the way that we ended up in the Newsroom so now as well as being in the Newsroom and having the same type of functions that we were providing to Facilities TV that we were now providing to the Newsroom. In addition then we would have had the IR, sick leave, pensions etc.

What are the benefits then – well I suppose you get a fuller picture in terms of the HR function itself – the other area is training of course, where you would have been dealing with a slice, ok a fairly big slice albeit of the HR function as it would apply both to the area and to the individuals affected – now you are dealing with everything essentially from beginning to end from recruitment to all the terms and conditions, annual leave, sick leave, pension, training, even things down to welfare with a small w I suppose – those issues where you would have previously had experts so in that sense I suppose it is a more rounded function. The downside is twofold; one you don't have access to the same level of expertise so you are going out and to a greater or lesser extent and having to re-invent the wheel when previously there would have been someone who would have had ready made wheels! And equally you are never going to become an expert on a particular topic because one you just don't have the resources and two you just aren't doing it with the same level of frequency so even though you now have re-invented the wheel for a particular item you may not do that item again for another twelve to eighteen months and while you are not quite back to square one you are definitely only on square three or four so I suppose those are the main disadvantages.

T: Do you feel now that for decentralised HR staff they are taking a step backwards in their profession - that they play more of a practical than a strategic role?

D2: Given the particular IBD that we are in I would say yes I have less of a strategic role but not because of the decentralisation I would say more because of a lack of resources. We are a relatively big IBD and being a fairly small HR team I've had no choice but to be very involved in the practical aspects of HR. I don't think the

decentralisation of itself has limited strategic ability in that even when the function was centralised ultimate strategy would still have been driven at Executive Board level. But
 435 strategy with a small 's' I think still does apply in the decentralised function it's just that in my particular IBD we get bogged down because of the practicalities – I think if you were to look at a bigger IBD with more resources such as TV I would have said the Head of HR still has a strategic role – she can't go off entirely and do her own thing but that has **never** been the case, whether we're centralised or decentralised that a particular
 440 area could go off and do their own thing.

T: And what would you see as your priority now that you've been decentralised – where does the emphasis lie – room for potential conflict of goals?

445 D2: As part of the strategic framework objectives were set for RTE Corporate which in turn were reflected in the objectives set for the IBD, which in turn are reflected in each manager's particular objectives so it's very much a cascading exercise so I don't think in terms of say strategies or the way we might want the HR function to go in the newsroom to go there's any conflict with where central HR or the Corporate body might
 450 like the News to go – I think where there is conflict, or even conflict mightn't even be the right word is more on the practicalities in that the Newsroom would define a particular set of needs which corporately would be recognised in a general sense but not necessarily in the way of achieving it – in other words for example the newsroom wants to take on an extra person to perform a function. Corporately it is recognised that that
 455 function needs to be performed so there is no contradiction there but the way of achieving that – there can be a mismatch in that corporately we don't agree you should be increasing your numbers but yes we do agree you should be doing that particular task. But that is going to be inevitable and that doesn't change your priorities and your priority is to meet the HR needs of the newsroom but within the context of the
 460 Corporate HR requirements and because there is that cascading they aren't contradictory so you don't have to choose one over the other but your methodology can contradict.

Which of the following activities do you feel you spend most of your time on?

- 465
- HR Administration
 - Updating your own HR knowledge.
 - Providing support for line managers
 - Providing specialist HR input to wider business issues
 - Developing HR strategy and policy
 - 470 • Implementing HR strategy and policy

D2: I suppose the number one is providing support to the line managers. To be honest here I suppose next is HR Administration, then Developing HR strategy and policy, then implementing policy then input into wider issues and then last but not least
 475 updating my own HR knowledge.

T: And do you feel this is how your time is best spent?

D2: No I suppose one couldn't in fairness – one would like to see the HR admin drop
 480 to if not the last or the second last.

T: Ulrich identifies the roles of HR as being a Strategic Partner, Employee Champion, Change Agent and an Administration Expert – where would see HR, News in these statements?

D2: One would like to think that strategic partner would be the most accurate description of the function and in many ways it is – in that if the newsroom decides for example that it would like to do a breakfast news yes HR will be very much involved in that conversation because it won't work unless you have the personnel on board to do it. I suppose the decision though as to whether or not one should do breakfast news that level of strategy HR would be more I suppose in the background – the decision being taken that we would do breakfast news would be based on other issues initially such as why we should do it – the audience, the funding, our competitors, our public service remit, those kind of very high end issues would be the initial topics – then I would say the background music to that would obviously be the HR implications so I suppose strategy at that level we wouldn't necessarily have an active role it would be once the decision had been taken that that is the strategy they would like to pursue HR then becomes the partner in terms of turning that idea into a reality but our input in relation to the actual idea itself of doing it would only have HR as the background issue at that stage and it is the other issues such as the remit, our audiences, if it is a good thing to do in itself, we are not involved at that strategic level – So I'd have to say it is strategic partner with a small 's'.

D2: Now, Employee Champion

T: Do you think people might feel in any way limited in who they can approach in relation to the various HR issues if they only have one HR team they can approach who will be sitting across them on an interview board, or that they might meet across the table at IR discussions and then they may need to discuss a welfare issue with them? Do you think people might find that difficult?

D2: No I don't think so, I mean people seem to be more than happy to come in and discuss any number of different issues (IR, recruitment) it doesn't seem to affect the relationship between us – but I think this does in fact very much depend on the individual HR practitioners and I think that would probably apply whether it was decentralised or not – I think if you feel someone is approachable no matter in what context you've met them previously if you felt they were being fair and open, whatever, they would call in to see you. I think the downside might be not so much that because they have met you in an adversarial situation they now can't see you with another hat, it's that you may not have the level of expertise. In other words because we say we had a welfare expert they may call to you but it may be that they have no one else now to call to, but also that you might know someone that may be better able to deal with the issue than yourself, in fact you may not be capable of dealing with the issue so I think there is a limitation from an employees point of view point, I think it is more that you're just not as familiar with a particular topic as the particular expert was previously there as opposed to the fact of being decentralised being the limiting factor.

Administrative Expert. Are you seen as an Admin Expert. By default the hr function is seen, but very much within the HR remit. I mean I think in terms of the wider

admin because there is a resource there that has that specific function I don't think that we suffer too badly from that front. I think in relation to say the software, the computer software that we have that is essentially a HR system yes when it comes to that we are seen as the experts, I think that is inevitable.

And last but not least, Change Agent.

I suppose that's a mixed bag in that line managers are seen as Change Agents. I think HR is seen as a change agent but they're very much married in the sense that it is both the line manager and the HR function together. I think in terms of say work practices, that because I suppose the expertise lies with the line in terms of the day to day working practicalities of the area that the line managers are seen as the experts and while HR would help to bring about the change in terms of the negotiations, in terms of what needs to be done, how it will be done, the process and procedure, I don't think in terms of the editorial changes that would take place that HR would be seen as a change agent in that sense. It would be more of a change agent in terms of the add ons such as the management of annual leave and sick leave, those personnel type as opposed to the editorial issues.

T: Look at relationship you now have with line managers

D2: Given the particular IBD within which we work I would have said that:

1. There is a very flat structure in the newsroom in that essentially there is just one tier of senior management and it's also a very compact, physically compact unit. And it has always been a very open place, in that the newsroom would have said that they had Partnership before Partnership was ever invented. And because of the open door policy that the senior managers had and continue to have, they have always carried out a HR function in terms of meeting staff with any issues that the individual has or even groups may have without them say turning into formal IR issues, so they have always worn the HR hat - ok with the HR writ small but it has always been there so that in that sense decentralisation hasn't created a significant change. I would have said that if there has been change it has been more where the line managers have changed in the sense that if there has been a new senior manager into the area whose way of operating is to take on more of the HR role that has been their individual way of working and it hasn't been the decentralisation per se that has driven that - they have taken it on themselves. Also as part of Senior Manager objectives I suppose the HR role has become more obvious in that it is now specifically written down but I think that in this particular area it was always a function that they carried out anyway for the reason I mention earlier, yea

T: And really then do you think it boils down to the individual manager rather than anything else on how willing they are to take up the HR role?

D2: I think there hasn't, just looking at the senior managers, because once again it's such a flat structure; well there has been a certain amount of change in terms of the Senior Managers, I suppose, they were all willing, with perhaps one exception, to carry out this role because I think they always saw it as part of their role as Managers anyway so I don't know if the word would be happy, I think the word would be that they always would have seen it as part and parcel of what they do because of the nature of broadcasting, maybe news in particular. The Journalist is almost if not quite

the end product but they are synonymous with the package that they are doing therefore if the Journalist isn't getting it right then the newsroom isn't getting it right and on that basis the senior managers and the line managers see it as part and parcel of getting that package on air that they deal with any HR issues. I suppose there was one area which previously didn't belong to the Newsroom where the line manager wouldn't have seen their role as being HR in the sense that Corporately HR might have been described but after they became part of the Newsroom and there was a change of Manager, you saw that individual manager once again taking on that function and once again I don't know if they would say they were happy but they would see it as part and parcel of what they do as a line manager.

T: Do you feel they have received adequate training and support?

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D2: Am; there has been specific training provided, now they haven't all gone through it at this stage. Many of the most senior managers would have, but the next line of managers wouldn't necessarily, and I suppose some of the issues there is that some of those managers don't always see themselves as having a HR function as opposed to having an editorial function. Therefore I think you would have a very mixed response to the question of being supported in their role – some of them wouldn't even necessarily see themselves as having the role. For those who would see themselves as having the role I would have said that yes they would be satisfied with the level of training in general. I suspect that, like anyone dealing with HR, that when a particular issue crops up that you haven't received training on, you are always going to feel a wee bit at a loss and especially now because there is no expert on that area. The loss would feel somewhat greater because even if they go to the HR person in their IBD that person might not be an expert either. But other than that I would say yes, managers would say they have received good support be it in training or from their own HR function.

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T: What do you think from the line managers point of view are the particular advantages and disadvantages of having a decentralised HR team present?

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D2: I suppose the advantages are that they can almost talk in short hand at this stage in that we would have, as a dedicated team, a better understanding of how News gets made. Therefore if not quite at the stage we can almost predict problems, we can at least fully understand the problem once it has been highlighted as opposed to then having to explain in any detail as to what it means. As I say we are capable of understanding the hidden nuances, the subtleties of the personalities, and what will or won't run in terms of the line manager trying to achieve a particular goal. It also means that we can predict problems in advance, not editorial problems, but HR problems in that because we now have a familiarity with the personalities, the work practices, that if a line manager is say looking to change a work practice, we are well tuned in to what is likely to be the outcome if they go down a particular route in a particular manner.

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The disadvantage, I suppose once again it gets back to the designated HR team being a jack of all trades – I wouldn't say we are an expert at none, we would be an expert in some things but not in everything. I suppose that is the major disadvantage. I

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don't know if there are any other major disadvantages.. I suppose you'd have to ask one of them!! (laughs)

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Look at the role of the Corporate Centre

T: What currently is the role and focus of Corporate HR?

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D2: The role and focus of Corporate HR – I suppose it is all the things that you would sort of expect. It is to devise overall strategy and then develop overall policy to ensure consistency of practices and local policies throughout the organisation. To ensure that each of the IBD's is focussed on meeting its objectives so that in turn the Corporate

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Centre can achieve its objectives as defined in our strategic framework and licence fee commitments.

T: What issues if any would you refer back to the centre on?

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D2: Issues of recruitment I suppose would be the one that gets referred back the centre most often in that if we are looking to recruit new staff, but more in particular if we are looking to recruit additional staff that would automatically be referred to Corporate HR.

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Industrial Relations issues that would have implications for other IBD's or for the body Corporate would get referred. They I suppose would be the main ones that get referred centrally. Then in a more general sense you would use Corporate HR as a sounding board because even though what you are doing shouldn't have implications elsewhere that is not to say that the same local issue hasn't arisen elsewhere and that there is a chance that the HR person in that other IBD may also have raised it so that once again it would be to ensure a consistency of practice even on local issues.

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T: Cross-divisional communication and information sharing – How effective do you feel that has been?

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D2: I would have said it is pretty effective in that there is a procedure there to ensure such information does cross the various IBD's in that we meet as a group every week and we go through the various issues so that if an issue is of interest to another IBD it gets highlighted. Equally if Corporate are pursuing a particular line we get to hear about it at those meetings. And then there would be ad-hoc meetings or we would set up cross divisional small working groups on issues that are of common interest such as things like transition year placements, things like that.

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T: If I could touch on the dotted line reporting structure that you as a decentralised HR practitioner have back to the Director of HR / Corporate HR. How strong do you think that line is.

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D2: I would have said it is a strong relationship in that because the two big issues of recruitment and IR are of such corporate interest it is inevitable that the relationship is strong.

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T: Do you think it should be stronger or weaker?

685 D2: Should it be stronger, no. Should it be weaker, in the area of recruitment I
would have said in that at the beginning of a year each IBD is given a headcount within
which to live, for that year. I think that so long as the (decentralised) HR function is
willing to accept that responsibility for ensuring it lives within that headcount there
should be complete discretion. That is not the case. As I mentioned earlier if we do
690 want to recruit an additional body it must go to Corporate HR even if it is within the
allowed budgeted numbers for News – I think yes it should go to Corporate HR for
information purposes but not for decision making purposes. I think if the IBD has
decided that they need to recruit that individual – they have the budget and they have
the number – it should not have to revert back to the centre.

695 On the IR front I think it makes sense that there is a strong relationship there where
there are common grades across the organisation. Where there are grades unique to a
particular IBD I think the relationship is probably is just about right in that while we
may advise Corporate HR I don't think they interfere too much at that level.

700 And in terms of other issues, again I think it is about right. It's really about keeping
central HR advised, I don't think they will really interfere with a particular way of
doing something as long as I say it doesn't have cross divisional repercussions.

705 **T: What has the difference been the difference for you in reporting to the
Managing Director, News IBD as opposed to Director of Human Resources?**

D2: The big difference is when it was centralised I would have had no reporting
relationship into anyone other than the Director of Human Resources so I suppose the
710 main difference in reporting to Managing Director of News is that; well you could look
at it from the two issues I would report on;

- 1 On practicalities
- 2 On debate

So for example when you are reporting to Managing Director of News on an issue a lot
715 of the time you will be reporting on the practical application of what he wants to
achieve. So I will report on how what he is looking for is currently being achieved and
then the other is the debate and that is where I feel something should happen or should
not happen and I would be discussing – I won't say arguing.. you don't argue! But
forcefully putting across the HR viewpoint and as to why it should be that viewpoint
720 that should hold as opposed to the viewpoint of the Managing Director of News. But
irrespective of whether it's the practicalities or debate we are having the contest is very
much of wanting to achieve the same thing. When reporting to the Director of
Corporate HR whether you were talking either practicalities or debate it was much
more of a persuading role in that you didn't necessarily feel that the Head of Corporate
725 HR was sympathetic to what the newsroom was trying to achieve. He may well be
neutral but you had to have a much bigger conversation before you could then get to
the actual practicalities of what the issue might be – so I think that might be the big
difference for me. With Managing Director of News you are speaking much more of a
common language with central HR it is much more of a persuasion even on just
730 practicalities you always had to have this big conversation.

T: Look at the overall structure which encompasses a decentralised HR, Finance, Technology and Sales structure – from the organisation's viewpoint what do you think the advantages and disadvantages have been for RTE?

D2: I mean the obvious one's we have mentioned earlier in terms of the transparency and the accountability and efficiency. Also from the organisation's viewpoint it is easier to pin information down. One of the issues that has always been around in terms of accountability and transparency is the cost of a programme hour – it is very very difficult to define and when we were centralised, almost impossible to define. So I think that has been one of the major benefits because now an IBD is responsible for all of its own costs – it becomes easier; I am not saying you can always do it but at least it becomes easier to define what it actually costs to make a programme and if things are going well or not going well it is easier from a corporate viewpoint to isolate an area where things are or are not being achieved be it objectives or practical applications level.

T: Would you see duplication as one of the disadvantages for the organisation?

D2: One of the disadvantages for the organisation would definitely have to be the loss of expertise – now that is for a couple of reasons, not only was there decentralisation there was also a downsizing factor. If there had been no downsizing would there still have been a loss of expertise? I suspect there would have been. If you look in particular at the Industrial Relations function in HR for example so yes it is the loss of expertise.

Duplication almost inevitable in that there is a high end admin function in all of the IBD's – If you added up all those decentralised staff numbers would they be greater than the centralised HR function – Probably. Once again difficult to assess because not only was there decentralising, downsizing but you also brought in a completely new software package so you are not comparing like with like. It is very difficult then to just look at centralisation vs. decentralisation because you had lots of different things happening all at the same time as decentralisation. I feel though that decentralisation as a whole, the benefits outweigh the negatives. The loss of expertise is a problem but that may be more of a reflection of the downsizing rather than decentralisation.

I think the decentralisation of the major HR functions has been good. The decentralisation of training, welfare, things like that, I think are a disadvantage.

On a personal note the decentralisation of training especially from the newsroom point of view is a loss (2 HR employees moved to news as opposed to the three that were assigned to the other IBD's so news was without a training specialist in the line) – We don't have the luxury of having our own training expert in news.

Interview Ends.

Transcript of Interview with D3

780 **T: To what extent was there a deliberate policy by RTE to devolve HR activities to the line?**

D3: The policy was put in place about three years ago with the then Director of Personnel –that was the beginning of devolution really - prior to that we had people
 785 working in the line but it was in a very limited capacity. It then became more formalised and it was felt that line management should take responsibility for the people management aspects of their staff– they had always come back to HR for support so there was the issue of taking responsibility, accountability, being more proactive in dealing with issues as they arise, when they arise, as distinct from issues becoming IR
 790 issues which shouldn't happen in the long term. So at that time the policy was made to push HR teams into the line, let them look after the entirety of the HR function, all different aspects from IR, training and development, recruitment, contracts management, all the different facets that we do in conjunction with the management of the systems that we have in place such as PeopleSoft and that the HR teams particularly
 795 the Heads of HR of the various IBD's, would then ensure as part of their brief, ensure that line management take on more responsibility for people management issues. (That is the corporate view - devolution)

From what we are doing here at local level there is an ongoing process to make
 800 managers aware that they have to take more responsibility. That is time consuming, it is a lengthy process and it is a cultural change issue as well that they have seen themselves, particularly in Radio, when you break up the management groups you have Editorial, Technical / Operational and that's it really – it is very hard to convince editorial managers more so that they have to take up more of the responsibilities in
 805 dealing with their staff so things like the take up of PeopleSoft has been a difficulty for them – they are using it because they have to use it. But at the end of the day they seem themselves as having an editorial not a people management role in their jobs.

T: Do you think they feel those aspects of the job should continue to be carried out by the HR function?
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D3: I think some of the line managers do feel yes it is a HR job to be done by HR but I think the Managing Director of Radio believe it is line management responsibility so senior managers now have a job to convince their line managers to take on this role and
 815 we are doing ok but it is taking time but generally speaking there is a greater emphasis on communication and openness and trying to deal with issues as they arise and an emphasis of local staff consultation on issues, individual or collective. There is a recognition of the need to look at training and development and look at what the needs are that affect output which the line managers are taking a more proactive role in now.
 820 In the general sense we are not there yet but maybe 50 to 60% so that's not so bad.

T: What activities do you think then have been or can be devolved to the line?

D3: Well let's break them down a bit.
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Training and Development – there has been a good level of involvement of line managers here

830 PeopleSoft – they are now using it the way they should be using it. Sick leave, annual leave and TOIL.

Recruitment – they are involved as much as they can be – they get involved in shortlisting, drawing up job specs, drafting advertisements, identifying selection criteria, they will be involved in the interview process and deciding on the outcome so as much involvement as one could expect.

835 Industrial Relations – involved as much as they can be – I think there is an issue in relation to training here – there are some people in Radio need training in that area to understand what the issues are, what the processes and procedures are and what is required of them in these meetings.

840 They do need to put more of an emphasis on the day to day issues of managing staff – they need to turn these things around a lot more quickly than they have been doing. They have done some training recently which is very beneficial. They understand the issues that we have with headcount but ultimately they will ignore this if they want to bring somebody in and that is a fundamental problem that we are having at the minute
845 but it is being addressed. Senior Managers recognise this but pull back when faced with the issue and will argue editorial reasons for the extra staff requirement but one of the main advantages when you are decentralised and you are in the building with them is that you do get a better sense of the business, of what the product is, and what the needs are – you are working and interacting with people on a day to day basis and you get a
850 better sense of what is going on. But it is about working in tandem with them, not in opposition, that is the crucial thing – it is about building up relationships and working side by side but they (line managers) have to feel that you are competent – if they believe for a moment that you are not up to speed with something they will let you know about it pretty quickly – that is one of the key aspects of a decentralised HR
855 function - they do expect the full service because they don't have the support of Corporate HR anymore.

T: What do you think line managers impressions are of having a decentralised HR team?

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D3: I think they think it is a good thing in a general sense. I think they have certain expectations, I can only speak about Radio now. I think they want it here, I think they see the benefits of having it here and they want different things from HR now than they wanted years ago. They want a more high end service from HR now, this thing about
865 the day to day transactional activities of issuing contracts, dealing with increments, probations, lump sum payments, general day to day stuff really but It doesn't add value in terms of what they see. The added value will be seen in recognising what the output is, yes doing the day to day really well, but looking at planning things in advance, things like headcount planning, succession planning and training and development needs and
870 putting processes in place to affect those. They want you to be a consultant, they want to be able to come to you with a question, on a policy matter, a legal matter, an IR matter, on a training matter, you name it and they want you to give them an answer. They don't want you to say mmm not too sure about that.

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T: Do you feel from your own point of view, given decentralisation in the end happened quite quickly, that HR were given sufficient time to get themselves up to speed on all the areas they were required to cover?

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D3: No, absolutely not. The new job is completely different and it was set out completely differently. You could see exactly what they were looking for – they wanted decentralised HR to drive things instead of just being reactive to them. They wanted this structure of professionalism, this consultancy setup whereby they can come in to HR and deal with any issues and have that support. What they found in reality was that the way the teams were put together was just looking at oh you are particularly experienced in that area so you can pop in there and your background is in another area so you can pop in here. In hindsight it didn't create the skills mix or knowledge base that we needed to be effective. And it is only recently that we are even getting the opportunity to address that and even still we are not there yet. There is a huge gap between where I operate and the rest of my team operate. Then too much comes in to me and then I don't have the time to concentrate on the things I should be concentrating on which then takes away from the value added which reflects negatively on the decentralised HR team.

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T: Do you think then that was one of the downsides when HR were decentralised – that there wasn't a sufficient analysis of the skills that were required in the decentralised teams and that people were not sufficiently looked at to see what skills mix they had.

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D3: Absolutely – well there wasn't enough thought put into. But also they thought when we were putting the systems in place that all processes would nearly run themselves and that everything would be extremely efficient and standardised. Everyone thought these systems would go in and they would be flawless but we have seen that they are not. They looked at staff numbers more than a skills mix for the various IBD's – there wasn't any sense of strategic thinking about what the impact was going to be or even thinking about what the individuals in the decentralised teams were going to have to deal with, no realisation of PeopleSoft and the difficulties it was going to bring, the new fees payments methods and contracts issues, which was all new and nobody had any knowledge of and all the technical problems that we encountered as well – the skills mix of the team was not gone into in any depth, no thought put into it. And now everywhere has upped their numbers so even that in itself says 'bad decision on how it was implemented' – not properly thought through and we had to wing it and as a result we suffered a great deal of stress and we were presented in a very negative light to management because we just couldn't achieve what they expected and what they had been led to believe could be expected. So that was a very serious negative but more recently we have been able to build up on that relationship again. There is a recognition from the DG down that people management is crucial to the core business and if we don't have the resources to support people management issues then we're going to have a problem with the product and it is time therefore to get that in gear.

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And we need to focus more on people – I mean it stands to reason if 70 to 80% of your costs are labour costs then where should your emphasis be? Therefore we need to grow HR and grow support for it and we need to grow it in a different way than we did in the past and there needs to be more of a focus on strategic HR management

than just personnel management. We are now trying to create time to deal with the more high-end issues. Because that is where the value added is, that is what we will be measured on.

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T: From a personal point of view then what is your reaction to working in the line?

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D3: It is very difficult to work in the line because you have to have that total overall generalist approach but you don't have time to get it – we do have a good knowledge base built up from your experiences and academic knowledge from studies but you need the experience. You need to be exposed to your environment to get the experience and then you become very aware, you learn the politics, you learn the dynamics and how to deal with particular groups and individuals.

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Do I like being decentralised? Yes I do like being decentralised – I think it is great to be on the ground, it gives you a great sense of the business. You meet people and you are interacting in a different way, you're not just caught up in this one little group in the centre that is cocooned from everyone else in the business. You get an understanding of the issues which means that if you do have to go to Corporate HR and argue the issue from the business end of it you have a better understanding of it and really that is what it is all about. It is about understanding what the product and the business is, knowing the people who are the decision makers and influencing their decisions as best you can and being able to talk their talk which we were never able to do in the past. So that is a very good benefit.

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Problem is it is now becoming somewhat repetitious which is now why we need to move into this other level of activity.

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T: What has the difference been for you in reporting to the Managing Director, Radio IBD as opposed to Director of Human Resources?

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D3: First of all you are dealing with different managements. The problem with reporting to central HR was that the Divisional Heads didn't have that ownership of you and I think there was always that element of not being part of the 'family'. Although you were in the fold you weren't really in it at the same time. Because your reporting line was somewhere else. And you had to toe the Corporate HR line when difficulties arose and that was quite a difficult reporting relationship.

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When the decentralised team first came over to Radio we reporting directly into the Managing Director, Radio IBD. Now we report into the Head of Operations – we also have a new Board structure in Radio and **HR is not part of that Board.**

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T: Have you been given a reason as to why this is the case?

D3: They say it was the way the structure was set up?

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T: Who set up the structure?

980 D3: I think the Radio structure mirrors Television and I think we just fell in line with that. And initially HR was set up under Operations in Television and then we copied that. I made the point that I didn't think that was the way to go and I think we set the function back a lot in doing that. Subsequently a month or so ago I raised this issue again but as an issue to be addressed again in six months again. I think for HR to have a
 985 profile or to give it the profile it should have then it needs to be on that board and if it isn't there then it will never have it. You are reporting into somebody, you are not reporting to the Board. I can see the logistical reasons behind it, I can see some of the benefits as you can't have everyone reporting directly to Managing Director, Radio. But if you take the statement I made earlier about our commitments to the focus on
 990 people management then I think it is a contradiction in terms that HR aren't even on the management boards of the IBD's. If you want to be strategically aware and part of what the business is then you must be at Board level but I think HR has to prove itself now probably before they let you in!! I think we are much clearer as to what is expected of us today.

995 Back to the question now! I had a direct link back into the MD's office and the MD can't have everyone reporting into him realistically so that is why he set up this other structure and time will tell whether that is appropriate or not. The difference in reporting into Radio as opposed to reporting into HR is that you are part of the business
 1000 in radio, you are regarded as the key person dealing with HR issues in radio. I think it is good in the sense that you have more autonomy to be able to push things in the way that you would like to see them being pushed. Ultimately if I am going to be responsible for HR in this area then I feel I should have a say in how it's going to be run. So I'm not being driven by some corporate imperative. There are restrictions and constraints on
 1005 policies and all those type of things and I acknowledge that but essentially I have very little need for Corporate HR when you think about it. We have our manuals and guidelines and once we work within those I think it is fine. I think the way the corporate centre is at the moment I think it sometimes imposes restrictions on me that I sometimes don't want to have.

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T: Do you feel though that they should have a certain level of control over the activities of the decentralised HR teams?

1015 D3: I do think there is a need for Corporate HR -- I do think so and I don't think we should ever lose that function. I think there are key aspects of HR that only they address and should always be left there. I think you always have to be aware of business units and the possibility of business units at a time of crisis being pulled back into a central framework anyway so if you haven't got something in place when that happens then really it is going to be very, very difficult. You need them to look after general
 1020 policies, pensions, approaches to IR, set structures on how to deal with say recruitment or performance management -- they should be centrally driven but then modified to reflect the needs of the particular IBD's but at least you have one template that is organisation wide and if you have people going off on solo runs sometimes they can have an impact elsewhere and therefore Corporate HR really needs to keep an eye on
 1025 what the decentralised teams are doing to make sure that if we do something over here it is not going to have an adverse effect

anywhere else in the organisation. That is one of the key roles of Corporate HR – Corporate Guidance, Corporate Governance and all of that and it is an important part.

1030 Even in terms of training and development maybe we should have some central function on that but even the recent management training programme, I think that is good that it is done by Corporate HR – It is good to have training that is consistent across the board instead of everyone going off and doing their own especially because managers can move from area to area within the organisation.

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Responsible to the business you are operating in so that is a plus because you have to know the business and even if you wanted to ignore the business you can't! You have to know how to deal with the managers, you have to know and understand what the people here want and if you have your objectives set by Corporate HR they will be corporate objectives, they won't be divisional objectives so decentralised HR would then lose its relevance. That is a good thing about reporting into the line.

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But what I find is I no longer have that knowledge of what's going on across the organisation because our weekly meetings are basic enough and I think that is an area where Corporate HR has a role to play. Other than that no other issues on reporting really.

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T: What activities do you spend most of your time on?

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T: HR Administration (day to day operational hr activities)

D3: I don't get involved in that – apart from the odd query.

T: Updating your own HR knowledge

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D3: No time which is a bad thing and something, which I have been thinking about recently. I want to look into things we haven't really looked into in the past like performance management, new forms of pay systems etc. Time is a major issue for us here though. We don't have the time to sit back and look at things and we need to create that time and that is something we as a HR team are looking into here.

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T: Providing support to line managers

D3: This takes up a huge amount of time – and again this is something that needs to be looked at here. This takes up about 70% of my time.

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T: Providing specialist HR input into wider business issues

D3: One of the problems of not being on the Board means that that question becomes less relevant. We have regular management meetings where issues would be addressed and where you will try to push things forward but that is not the level at which strategic decisions are taken, certainly it will feed into that but in terms of impacting people strategies in terms of not being on the board we are somewhat limited in what involvement we can have. We are not being as proactive as we'd like.

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T: Do you think then this is how your time is best spent?

1080 D3: Absolutely not, I am not getting enough time to be spending on what I should be
 spending my time on. I spend far too much time dealing with queries that other
 members of my team should be dealing with and I am not saying that is anyone's fault
 but it is just the skills gap within the team and the level of experience people have.
 I am the only person that can deal with Industrial Relations in this IBD. But that is
 1085 something you just don't get coming straight out of college. It takes years, I know that
 myself. It is a huge gap that we have all throughout the organisation and RTE is a
 pluralist based organisation, and has full recognition and support for the Unions, we are
 not Unitarist in our views although some managers would like to be!! We have our
 processes and we have confirmed that this is part and parcel of what we deal with. So
 1090 that is one big gap for RTE.

Also people need to have the confidence to deal with managers and be knowledgeable
 enough to deal with them.

1095 Because I have to concentrate on mid level work I never feel I am getting the time to
 deal with the high level issues and I try to get into it and that is what I am measured on.
 It puts a pressure on you to think differently then because I need to make sure the
 proper structures below me are in place to ensure we get to all the aspects that we need
 to.

1100 So I have planned that by the middle to the end of next year that I have someone within
 the team who feels prepared enough to be able to deal with some lower level IR issues
 if they show the competence but they have to appreciate the relationships that have
 already been built up and the levels of trust that have been built up so that would have
 to be respected and they would have to continue in that light. Again it is only
 1105 experiences that will get you there but you have to be prepared for the hard line.

**T: Ulrich's description of HR is that of Strategic Partner, Employee
 Champion, Change Agent and Administrative Expert – What would you use to
 describe the HR function within Radio?**

1110 D3: I think we are an Employee Champion and we shouldn't lose sight of that but
 that is something line managers need to deal with as well. I think we are lacking expert
 in the Welfare area because we lost our Welfare Officer during the downsizing process
 but we do know where to look.

1115 Yes I suppose we are a Strategic Partner, we're pushing managers, we're challenging
 them, we're working with them in terms of what the business needs are but again I
 think that not being part of the board has been a setback but I suppose there are
 different levels of strategy so it depends.

1120 Administrative Expert – Yep, essentially we are.

Change Agent is about challenging what we do and how we do it and I think it is a role
 for line management. I think that yes we would champion change in terms of leading
 1125 the charge and directing how we should approach things but essentially

it is up to line managers really. Line Managers should be constantly looking at what they are doing and how their area is working to see what could be done better or what should be questioned. HR can help them to do that. And this is an area where value added can come from

T: What effect has this move had on your role – more empowered or a loss of control – do you feel you are no longer a specialist in your field?

D3: Well I came from a specialised area in Employee Relations where I knew very little about anything else. Contracts, increments, probations etc ... well I had seen them but somebody else dealt with them. So when I came over there was a very steep learning curve to get into the whole personnel services end of the business which was very difficult. Training and Development had always been dealt with another department as well. So it's more that I have evolved into the role. When I took on the decentralised HR role it brought with it a completely different role with a completely different focus but it was also implemented at the same time as downsizing, the implementation of PeopleSoft, negotiation of the organisational transformation agreement so there was a lot of activity at that one particular time. This made it quite difficult and it didn't give the teams an awful lot of time to bed in. More about keeping your head above water at the time rather than developing the skills of the team.

T: Cross divisional communication and information sharing – How effective do you think that has been?

D3: Honestly? Minimal, ineffective, not ineffective, maybe ineffective is too strong. I believe that we don't have a proper formal level of communication at the levels we need to have it. We meet every Tuesday but to me there should be a set agenda for that meeting, we need to have a more structured agenda or meeting in place – it's very much just "what's happening in your area?" But people need to be willing to take the time to think about what they are dealing with and what the potential implications are in how they are dealing with issues and come back and share this with the times but again this all takes time. Is there anything I could share that other people might benefit from. I feel that certain areas are more open to doing that than others – one particular area would strike me as not adding any particular value to the general wealth of knowledge within HR. You get fed up because all the questions seem to be a bit one sided – getting information but never giving information back. Maybe now that is being a bit too harsh but there are times when it feels that way.

Communication from Corporate HR is ok, Corporate HR doesn't mean that much to me to be very honest with you.

T: Do you think there is a lack of focus on what the role of Corporate HR is then?

D3: Absolutely, I think there are one or two aspects of it where you can the benefits of it and then there are others that you just can't. It's like bums on seats over there but there are no real jobs if you catch my draft. And I don't think there is any appreciation by Corporate HR of the work that we have to deal with in the decentralised HR team.

I think that there are some of them there that if you threw them into our environment they wouldn't be able to cope with it – they would just prefer to pontificate and that's not everybody in Corporate HR I hasten to add. But in some ways the role seems to be the imposition of regulations - there is assistance there and there are people that you can go to which is great but in a way it is like the mother ship to some extent reigning you back in. There are elements of both support which is excellent, very positive, which you'll never regret having but again there are also restrictive controls there which can really annoy you when you are in the line because *again you have that understanding of the business that they don't*. I think there definitely needs to be a clearer focus on Corporate HR, who they are and what they are doing and the value that they are adding. The decentralised HR teams should definitely know the value corporate HR is adding and I don't think we do know that. Maybe we just aren't being made aware of the plans for the centre but maybe we haven't gone looking for that information.

I think more recently the profile of HR has gone up recently. Senior Management today as opposed to three years ago would view HR in a different light now and we could really build HR up and that needs to be driven by Corporate HR and then we could have an all singing, all dancing function and nobody is doing that and quite frankly nobody was even doing it when we were raising our own profile but we will end up missing the boat. Corporate HR need to take a real positive role in building that profile particularly when the understanding is there to build HR. – From the DG down it's there, build it, build it, build it and make it strong, it was decimated and that was wrong so they want us to build up again and deliver the service. I just think it is an opportunity that we are going to miss.

T: What have been the disadvantages and advantages of decentralising HR from an organisational point of view?

D3: Well I think decentralisation has been a better thing for the divisions which ultimately is RTE. RTE is a combination of all the divisions. Yea with that central governance that resource you can fall back on, that support if you need it; of course it needs to be properly managed, properly directed, properly resourced, with clear identification and with clear objectives of what it should be and what its plan is. The IBD scenario, the decentralisation of HR is a very positive thing. If you look at the other areas that have been devolved, IT, Sales I think that has been a positive thing too. All in all I would feel it has been a positive move for RTE but with perhaps certain tweaks required here and there.

Interview ends.

Transcript of Interview with LI

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T: Are you aware of the changed structure that's in place in RTE now?

L1: Yea I'm aware of it and we are operating under it so yes I am – I knew it was coming around and what's involved.

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T: Why do you think this restructuring was necessary for RTE?

L1: Well the funny thing about it is that I think it was part of the whole transformation package and what I think what happened was it was more because it was a requirement, not from a HR point of view but from a business point of view and that what had actually happened was that they decided ok this is not working because people are not accountable in their own areas because it is too vast and what we needed to do was go into our own business divisions so I mean to me it wasn't because it was a HR need it was because the organisation had changed and if the organisation had changed then obviously they had to look at how you were going to manage if you were say looking at a small company outside – you'd be saying well what does a small company do or a smaller company that might have a couple of hundred employees – you'd have your own HR in that area, so I mean that's the way that RTE has kind of divided up and that is the way I look at it even though it is hard on one level to come to terms with that because we were so used to thinking of everybody as a big global thing but now really I am part of the television division so as part of the television division this is the way we operate and we are accountable for what happens so that's the way I see it – it wasn't necessarily HR pushing this change.

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T: Who or what was the driving force behind this change?

External / Internal

L1: Well I think it was staring us in the face actually that we were going down the tubes – I think it was earmarked here about five or six years ago when television as a whole changed around Europe and the world and people's viewing habits changed so dramatically that we had to say hold on it's not good enough – we have to get out and sell RTE which we didn't do – I mean we were a Public Service Broadcaster so we had constraints on what we could do, what kind of sponsorship we could get and what advertising we could get so at the end of the day I think it was staring us in the face – it was definitely an external pressure; I think there were obviously pressures on us from the government, I think we operated in an ad hoc way – I know certainly in the area of television we always thought we were different and I think in some ways we are different because we make programmes and therefore the constraints on people working in programmes is completely different to someone working in an office but nevertheless there has to be accountability and even though I believe we did things well there wasn't the paper trail and I think all of that just came against us and you know certainly from an output, television programming was more important than anything else I think and that was what people wanted you know so ah so I think definitely it was external pressures that definitely put the push on us and we had to do something. I remember about five or six years ago we had seminars with all of RTE but just really looking at where we were going, how the

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1280 market had changed, the way the big guns were coming in – Sky etc. and if we were to survive what we had to do so then we knew what it was we had to do you know and that is what we are trying to do.

T: What is the role of the decentralised HR team in your IBD?

1285 L1: I think they are trying to find their role. I don't think it is as clearly defined as certainly I would like it to be. I think they are grappling, I think it's new and I think they haven't find the line yet and I think that's maybe the same in every area. I think all of a sudden if you're in a big centralised function I think people did certain functions and I think it was different from the way it is now – the way I see it here is it is very much a management of personnel and it is a human resource for this division and I think
1290 that goes through every aspect of the individual from what they need from the mundane upwards but I think it is still finding its feet – I don't think certainly it's there still. I suppose I would be quite critical if it.

T: So what impact do you feel it's presence has had on you as a manager?

1295 L1: Well I think it's just that it may be something here in RTE – I mean before we heard of decentralisation I probably wasn't as a manager, I probably wasn't as involved with Corporate HR as other people would have been – so therefore I kind of came into this role at the start of decentralisation but it hadn't really established itself – it's really
1300 about three or four years ago that I took on this role now (people manager role) and at that stage it was just a HR team of two people so that was really the start of decentralising of HR but it wasn't really just there yet so if I needed anything they answered the questions for me. I think as a unit certainly in television I would be quite critical because I don't quite think it has found its niche. I think it's still working on
1305 that.

T: What do you think they should be doing that they're not doing or vice versa?

1310 L1: Well yes and no – but I think it's probably a clearer definition of what their actual role is and I don't know if that has been spelled out and especially from the kind of work that I do I would rely on them heavily in terms of feeding in the contracts, looking for new staff or if there are issues with staff. I suppose it is a clear definition of their role but I mean that could be as much my fault or the manager's fault – I mean I
1315 might have a perception of what HR should be – and because of my age group it could be a very old fashioned way but I feel that as well as the paper trail that we have to have and I think that that can be standardised and simplified – that will just take time- that's just mechanisms for us to achieve what we want and I think we can get there on that. To me if people have a HR issue, in terms of even their work environment or whatever,
1320 I try to deal with it and then my next port of call is HR and I believe it's at that level that they should nearly stop everything to make sure this issue is resolved – I am horrified to say that I met one of my staff the other day and they were so so critical about how we have dealt with things – even in terms of recruitment and how we approach people who aren't successful and all of that sort of thing and probably it's a
1325 jolt if you hear on the

ground if you hear that staff feel they are not getting anything from HR – but then we are demanding too you know.

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T: What effect then do you think it has had on employees?

L1: I don't know in RTE whether there was a personal touch as myself before I became a manager – As myself I don't think I ever went to Personnel but maybe that's just me because I would have seen other people use Personnel but it just would never have dawned on me or I'd sort it out myself. I think people do go to HR and do use it and feel it's important to go to them.

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T: Do you think people feel limited now that they have to approach the same HR team no matter what issue they wish to go on?

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L1: I don't know whether it impacts on them. I suppose quite honestly I fall into a trap because sometimes I am the go between I think that people do come to me and I try and resolve something or people come to me and complain that there's no point in going to HR but then again it's not necessarily HR it's just that the team certainly in HR, TV is relatively new and just hasn't really come together yet and there's been too many changes. If there's a fault in the changes it's a fault that we haven't actually find the right combination for and it's been about two and a half years and that is probably too long – and tv is not a huge division so I'm amazed it has taken so long. On the other hand because of the introduction of all the new changes, with the introduction of PeopleSoft and all that went with that but just over the last year or two things that I felt should have been pushed by HR, even in terms of PeopleSoft, even in terms of the Annual Leave and TOIL, I felt wasn't followed through and I felt I was constantly doing a lot of work that I felt HR should have been doing but again I think that's just because the actual group here hasn't gelled and yet what we've been doing is that we've been adding people all the time which maybe isn't the solution but again I must admit I am quite critical of the way it is at the minute. If we are looking for the balance we need to look at what's important in the HR department and we certainly had a couple of individuals who were a bit raw when they came from the centre and felt that Television people were batty and that wasn't the way things should be done but in fact when they came over and saw things for themselves they picked up and picked up very quickly and very quickly saw themselves as a real resource for us here. And they were key even though they were probably more in the junior area so therefore it makes me believe that the right shake up would actually work and it can be beneficial. They may see themselves as having a certain HR function, which they do but they can't work on those issues because they are constantly getting bogged down with queries from staff and managers and all the other issues that go with that like can I bring somebody in, if I do bring somebody in how long can I keep them? – those were things that we didn't have to worry about before where now I or it's the same with everyone in programmes, they have to go through HR with this information so I think the flow of HR information has to work better – I think that is the bottom line – I think there's a breakdown in the flow of information and you know there is a big effort being made in HR especially since the new staff came on board to make everyone aware of who they can go to but we'll have to wait and see where that's going now!

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T: In an ideal situation then what do you feel the benefits of having a decentralised HR team would be?

1380 L1: I think if you have a good HR team and if there was a sense that the HR team was working and it was dynamic, particularly I'd say in the last few years when there have been so many changes – I've said this before in a lot of forms – particularly when our people were leaving, our own colleagues were leaving the organisation, and the culture in RTE was that people stayed here for years and years and years and they
1385 retired out of RTE. Then all of a sudden all of our colleagues were leaving RTE and I think that was a key time really for HR and for rehabilitation of those people that remained here, not of those that left, because it was the case that people were looking around and everyday people were coming in and knocking on our door saying cheerio and yet the people who were staying behind were left in this awful kind of vacuum that
1390 they didn't know what was going to happen, they'd made the decision to stay and there was no backup support and to me that was where HR should be absolutely dynamic but then I would view that certainly there should be a place in HR for that kind of welfare area and all of that (and I don't believe in pandering to people and I'm actually quite straight when dealing with people particularly if I felt people were swinging the lead or
1395 people were expecting too much out of work – my philosophy is that you come to work to work and if somebody has an issue or something that then I certainly think there should be at least one person who is experienced in this field and who is also out on the ground that know the people – now I do that and employee's managers do that so maybe that's where it should be – maybe it is not HR but I think maybe there are
1400 occasions where HR are supposed to have the expertise and they are the people who should have to deal with that.

T: Maybe sometimes an employee may want to go to someone who is a little bit more disconnected from their job?

1405 L1: Yes I think sometimes for people it may be difficult to discuss certain issues with their manager and I certainly think over the last number of years that kind of person who would be identified as Welfare, or have that experience would have been very good and I think that would still be important. I think the departure of the Welfare
1410 person has been a big gap – I myself have dealt with two people on two separate issues over the last twelve to eighteen months where I mean if there was a welfare officer, or I hasten to add if I felt I could have approached HR but maybe it's a fault with me, I felt that in my own experience I felt I was better able to talk the people through the difficulties but I mean we were talking serious health difficulties but in a stress,
1415 depression field.
I didn't feel I had the confidence to refer it to HR – but somebody like me, and maybe it is wrong, I will try and deal with it if I felt I was getting somewhere. But if there was a dedicated welfare person as was the case before I would have gone to them if I had an issue. I think staff need HR more now because of that stress that is there in the job now
1420 – there's less people working and people work harder and feel under pressure and if they feel under pressure and feel they are not being recognised – now that's not to say that this should necessarily come from HR but there should be a sense that it's a joint exercise from line managers and HR.

T: What is your understanding of the role of Corporate HR?

L1: I would have to say that I probably don't know much about what Corporate HR do. I am assuming that the people over there now as well as managing the individual IBD's so there would be that liaison there so that people would meet and all that would happen but that also emanating from Corporate HR is the policies and future HR policies, IR on a bigger level.

T: So you wouldn't really deal with or consult with Corporate HR as such?

L1: Well I mean I don't really consult with Corporate HR but if I did it's mainly to get advice on issues such as Health and Safety, or Sick Leave so in relation to those things – I am aware that it operates at a particular level. That is probably the only time that I would use them.

1440

T: I don't know if you are aware of this but each of the individual decentralised HR teams have a dotted line reporting structure back into Corporate HR / Director of HR. Do you feel that dotted line is necessary?

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L1: No I think given the nature of HR my immediate reaction would be no I think they should report back to Corporate HR because I think it is such a key area for any company that I think it is important because I think the Managing Directors of the various IBD's of this world are dealing with their own areas in a specific way and they need HR in that particular way and while I think HR can operate within each division separately and deal with the issues but I still think that while we are divided up into separate divisions I still think as long as we remain the way we are which is as a public service we still remain RTE – I mean I work for RTE and I would hope that everybody still feels we are all working for the same company because if not and we were a separate company; I think from a financial and operational point of view we are a separate company and we have to account for ourselves as a separate company but we are and we're not – we still count ourselves as part of the bigger picture but I think it is good because I think HR is a very specific area so I do think it is very important for them to have that interaction with Corporate HR and I think also and I'm sure like everything – the situations and issues that arise throughout the company that everyone is aware of them.

1460

T: I suppose Corporate HR need to ensure consistency in HR throughout especially and from a legal point of view it can't have people operating in different ways throughout the organisation really.

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L1: Yea it would be different if you were definitely a completely separate company but when you have other sections within one company – that is one of the issues that we did have here is that one type of contract was given to someone in television and a different type of contract was given to them in Radio and all that so I think we do need that link back.

1470

T: Has your role has changed since decentralisation or devolution of HR activities?

L1: I don't know if managers have taken on their full HR role really – I don't know if it was just because of decentralisation but maybe because of all the changes that have taken place (downsizing) but never before would I have had to look and be very conscious about contracts or engagements, contacting people to see if they are available and then having to go through the paper trail that is required now and waiting for that to come back from HR having been signed off on or not so for all of that certainly my workload has increased. I mean it has increased in a different way – obviously with peoplesoft and that, and certainly the other managers in the area (Producers, Commissioning Editors) - they have also taken on this role and it has been very difficult for them because obviously they were people who were more than likely recruited for their editorial expertise and their knowledge of programming not in terms of management skills as such and I think it has been a big big learning curve – again going back to what we were talking about I think that is where HR is central to assisting these people. I acknowledge that people need to learn and they have to be able to take up these other tasks but really that is not their background so because now all of a sudden they find that not only do they have to worry about ensuring audience ratings for the programmes but now they have to spend considerable time at a pc sanctioning annual leave, everything, where before the priority was programmes and budgets a little bit, but now they are absolutely signing off on everything and this has been a huge, huge learning curve for them. And we are not there – I mean there have been payments there that have not been approved because people don't sign into their worklists – that's where HR can be key for support and for encouragement but there's a way of doing it and it may taking going out on the floor and sitting with these people and that I think that it is the invisibility of our group at the minute that I would be critical of. But maybe that's because I feel under pressure then because they all come to me!

T: People feel a shift of priorities for them now?

L1: Well I mean there is but I actually think that it is very good – I mean I am in this organisation for the past twenty five years and I remember coming in and being quite taken aback by the way people would put in claims for travel and subsistence and being horrified by the way people could manipulate the system and nobody really ever looked at it or when we would do out budgets – I just couldn't believe it and I'm not saying that people were dishonest or anything but it was just wide open and I think it took a long time to change – it was a different culture and a different time then I suppose. It is key now that managers now **do** actually manage their area and I think it is essential that they all work to achieve that tight management and I don't think it's that difficult once the mindset is changed and I think once they get into a pattern of how you deal with the extra paperwork etc. but it is extra work and for people who weren't even computer literate and many of them weren't so it was very very difficult but again that's where you need the support from HR – only the other day we had to send a commissioning editor, who I do get on very well with, a blast of an email, because they were given clearance to bring someone in for a particular job for eight weeks and then there were asked to do something else and something again after that – and I thought we had learned from this – you just cannot do that!! And

1525 these guys will say I'm sorry but it's just that the person is really good and I try to tell them that if they are that good just come and talk to HR about it and then we will see what we can do – so you see you are battling.

1530 **T: So do you feel managers have received appropriate training and support for the additional aspects of the job they are required to undertake now?**

1535 L1: I actually think that they have, but I think, like a number of them went on courses in relation to Annual Leave and Sick Leave and they were thrilled – they thought it was the greatest, but you know you come back and in the busy work environment the way everything goes, you have to find the time to do it and then if you haven't done the training then it becomes a mountain to climb and you never get around to it. But I think a big effort was made here to try and get everyone trained and to encourage everyone to use the system and I think we are getting there but it's painful!!

1540 **T: Managers are set specific objectives for the year – do you think that people management objectives should be set for individual managers so that becomes more of a focus in their job?**

1545 L1: Well I think it should be very clear that you know when an area is being managed properly because you can see it and I think that that should be the objective from a senior management point of view – that you walk into an area and know it is being managed properly. There's a good vibe coming out of it, people are happy, things are getting done and I think in that way certainly the managers have to be accountable and if it ends up that some of the staff end up with forty days annual leave carried over
1550 from last year for example then I think that's a black mark and I think of course they should be responsible for that. I think we need to look at that here – I am line manager for different groups but yet when people are working in a certain area they also fall under the responsibility of the commissioning editor in that area – I'm not sure if we have got that right yet.

1555

T: Do you feel more empowered to do your job by having more responsibility for the HR aspects of the job or do you feel you are doing work that really should be carried out by HR?

1560 L1: I don't know in my case if it's that clear – do I feel more empowered? I suppose some of the stuff I do, I think some of it could be done by HR but in some ways, nobody since the change has come to me and said that I am absolutely responsible for the things that I do, in relation to the management of people. I mean I am line manager for the Programme Department Assistants, Broadcast Co-Ordinators and Assistant
1565 Producers and so therefore that is quite a big group of people and particularly for the BCO's I would very much be the key person and there's 28 of them, 23 AP's but when the AP's would go to a particular area, for the time of their assignment they would be managed by the Commissioning Editor but really they would come to me for most of the things so in that respect it hasn't really changed.

1570 I don't think I would feel empowered doing all of the extra work because you just get bogged down then but I mean it's coming though – well I mean I certainly have much more stuff to do now and I think that it is something that in time the HR in this IBD

1575 could maybe look at and see if this is the best way of managing the work. Maybe we
 need to take a look and see what's overlapping with HR and what's not – all I want is to
 know that if I have certain difficulties and I refer them to HR I don't want to see them
 left on the long finger, with these issues that I refer they are not going to go away and it
 needs to be sorted now – I don't want an email to be passed from x to y to z.
 But I will preface it by saying, in case I appear to be too negative, that I do think it can
 1580 work – I just don't think it's working yet (hr)

**T: Do you think though that this structure is more beneficial than the
 previously centralised HR function that was in place in the organisation?**

1585 LI: I think it absolutely could be more beneficial, I think it really has to be but I
 think we all in TV have to learn about what HR can do for us and I think because we've
 all had to change and get used to new systems that we've both been caught in that
 there's a frustration with all the stuff that television people had to do and waiting for
 answers from above that probably one would say that it has just taken too long and I'd
 1590 probably go back to my first point – I just think over two years is just too long and
 hopefully now and maybe it may not be the same in other IBD's but here it could be
 much better. I don't think things have gelled for them so maybe it's time to take
 another look at it here.
 I think HR is key and I think it should be visible. And I think it is a very good idea
 1595 having it here and I think that is important and I think it can work better. But there has
 been a lot going on in tv so I suppose you have to give it time as well.

T: Overall do you think this is a more successful structure for RTE?

1600 LI: It's hard to measure at this point in time. I think decentralisation has given a
 focus to everybody and I think that is important. I think certainly people in
 management and even people on the ground believe they are working for a smaller
 group, that they are working for television IBD and they know that they have to make
 the best of this, that they are responsible and I think in most cases when given that
 1605 responsibility most people up the ante – if you give people the opportunity you'll find
 most people are up for it. I think certainly from my workload, having IT available to
 me etc is much better and the service has been much better as a result. I certainly think
 that so all in all I think it has been a good move for RTE... it's work in progress!

1610 Interview Ends.

Transcript of Interview with L2

T: Are you aware of the changed structure in place in RTE?

1615

L2: Well my feeling is that all middle manager's have been fully informed of the break-up into different individual business divisions and am we are fully aware of it and we understand that our own HR requirements have shifted from what was in the corporate centre to the individual hr IBD's.

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My own situation is funny because we've actually stayed central so we're actually dealing with people we are very familiar with which I think is a great advantage to us I think.

1625

T: And do you think this restructuring was necessary for RTE or why do you think it was necessary for them to restructure?

1630

L2: Greater management brains than me have taken this route. I do think that there was an onus on individual areas to prove that they were viable and also that if there was a greater focus in on them they actually had to prove they were capable of sustaining themselves and making a profit and contributing to the organisation as a whole. I think as long as the organisation was to stay as an individual group it would have been too easy for certain areas to relax knowing that they would be supported by other areas. And I think this has been the general structure in major organisations across the globe. Leads to greater accountability.

1635

T: Who / what do you think was the driving force behind this restructuring? Do you think it came from the top?

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L2: I do feel it came from the top but I also feel it has been influenced by how other organisations have done it. If we look at say the likes of Aer Rianta now looking at breaking up into several individual units I think RTE is not so much a victim of a trend but has been influenced by the fact that other organisations have done a similar exercise, breaking divisions up into self sustaining units and if those units can sustain themselves that's where the power lies. Then again if they do prove successful that's fantastic for them. It's wonderful.

1645

T: It brings back an awful lot of accountability into the smaller areas and basically in this day and age if you don't make a profit then you really are in trouble.

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L2: What is the role of the decentralised HR team in your IBD now? I don't think that the function of HR as a whole has changed an awful lot from what it was- I dealt with Corporate HR before the changeover, I'm now dealing with them again and I don't really see a huge difference. I tend to use HR to advise me in the way I'm going, to make sure what I am doing is correct and to make sure I don't make any mistakes in the way I am approaching things. Very much guidance and I have had excellent relationships with HR so far thank god! Hopefully it will continue that way!

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T: What effect do you think it has on employees in the line (limited or good to have one point of contact?)

1665 L2: Well there is **the potential** that people could feel limited particularly if for arguments sake you don't particularly get on with somebody in HR and that you don't have a huge range of people that you can actually go to – not even so much somebody you don't get on with but perhaps someone you may not feel particularly comfortable with or confident about or somebody that you can actually open up to if you have a particular problem and there is that sort of danger- but then you can't have potentially twenty hr people in every IBD just to deal with potential problems. There is a responsibility on the individual HR IBD's to offer a range of comforts to people so that they can come to them and open up to them for what ever reason they need to. So I mean there is that potential but I think that overall it's a perfectly acceptable arrangement for employees.

T: Are there particular areas that HR are involved in that you feel they shouldn't or do you feel they hinder you in any way in getting the day job done?

1680 L2: Coming from an external background outside RTE, I found in coming into RTE that there was huge time delays in trying to achieve those sort of things. There are aspects of recruitment particularly that I found frustrating in that I had to go through five million channels to try and achieve my goal and even though I knew that goal was a perfectly reasonable one and on the outside would have been done overnight – so the have been hindrances in that way but what actually happens is that senior management have to take an overall picture and how my little piece fits into that picture is almost irrelevant to them – it's important to me but it's almost irrelevant to them and they have to make a decision based on the overall picture that they want – unfortunately then I have to bend with that but you know it's up to me then as a manager to fit that bill and make the very very best of that.

T: What do you feel is the overall role of Corporate HR?

1695 L2: Personally I would see them as being a guidance role to the other divisions and that if a problem arose in the other divisions that they would actually come to corporate HR and ask 'how should I do this' but corporate hr would be sort of an umbrella for the organisation in effect but that it also must give me the service that I need from a corporate person but basically sort of a guidance, to give directives where necessary and to lead where necessary – that is the view I would have of corporate HR.

T: Big focus for them is to ensure there is consistency

1705 L2: Absolutely – On top of that as well Corporate HR have to ensure that all the various IBD's are actually achieving the standards they are supposed to be achieving and that the legislation that we do have is being implemented right across the board not just in the centre.

T: Do you think Corporate HR adds value to the organisation.

L2: Yes I do! I firmly believe it adds value to the organisation – I think you do have to have a central HR division that guides and leads – I do think that is actually very important. What would happen without it is that we'd all go off in various different directions and that would actually lead to trouble further down the line at some point.

T: Has there been any major implications for you since the changed structure? Has it impacted on your role directly?

L2: I don't think it's impacted on us greatly – we work in the services area – I often wonder would it have an impact on the different scales that people would see themselves in – At one stage my guys used to be on sort of a secretarial scale which we don't really have in services now anymore – these secretarial scales have now moved to other areas so it could be sort of slighter impacts that way – I think though now it is up to every individual to be as flexible as they possibly can to achieve the end goals. And once you are being treated fairly and reasonably and with respect I think that's ok you know but that goes right across the board – not just for Corporate HR

T: Managers are set specific objectives that they strive to meet – Do you think HR activities should be set as a specific objective for managers. – i.e. that you have a people management role.

L2: Well I do – I've always presumed I've had a people management role apart from the objective of getting the work done – I do lean on HR for advice – I wouldn't claim to be any expert – but where I do have complications I do come across them and try to get it right. As far as my own objectives I do strive to achieve them – I don't always achieve them but as far as possible!

1740 What angle do you want me to come at? (seeks clarification) Managing people is seen as part of the job but maybe the amount of time managers need to dedicate to this isn't appreciated – taking away from the time available to dedicate to the end product. i.e. output.

I suppose you need to look at it from the angle are you a people manager or are you a production manager? The role of the manager is to manage the people to do the work and in that aspect yes there is sort of a hr involvement at really a micro level and that you do end up managing people, you do end up managing people's problems, you do end up listening to people and to their problems and trying to accommodate their problems and there are days when you are there as a shoulder to cry on and then there are other times when you are celebrating something so there are balances but it tends to be the other way around slightly! You tend to get more of the stress than you do of the joy. It is probably an area that RTE could actually work on more with middle managers and I've just completed a course where we've dealt with HR issues but mostly in relation to law where you're obliged to make sure the working time act is adhered to and various other aspects. There is increasingly more and more admin work involved in this role as with peoplesoft and trying to manage holiday leave and sickness absence and all that sort of stuff. So it has become more and more difficult

and at times the focus can go away from the end product and back on to the person.

1760 Also another aspect that I feel strongly about as well is that because RTE is reducing its staff so much that managers are becoming more involved in the operations end of things rather than managing people to do the job and I find that's becoming difficult in my end that I'm struggling to get away from the operations end and to manage the people – I'm working harder at the moment.

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T: Other managers have mentioned that they are being paid to be a manager but not getting the opportunity to be a manager?

L2: Yes that's very much the way we are in our place at the moment and what I'm finding now or I've found myself in the situation and I have to deal with it, so what I'm doing now is trying to reorganise and restructure the way we actually do things to allow me to get back to the managerial role because there are other projects that I'm involved in but I'm not getting the time to put in to do them and because we're in the service industry as well you are more or less as good as the last job you do – you don't like to let people down and if someone comes up with a crisis you try and achieve it. Everything has a deadline and we do our best and luckily we don't often fail – we don't have a bad reputation! But we can be the victim of our own abilities as well because if you do it once you know and what used to be the extraordinary is now the norm.

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T: Do you feel you have been given sufficient training and support to carry out the HR aspects of your job?

L2: I think that I'm reasonably lucky because my manager is fairly progressive and he has encouraged me to do courses and also an opportunity arose to do a course through RTE. I also did a manager's course externally which is for newly appointed managers and a similar course ran parallel that RTE ran and it was very, very interesting to compare both in fact. I got a huge benefit from the course and have implemented some of the recommendations made on the course and this has been of great benefit to me. My own manager has encouraged me to go on further and do a degree course as well and it's nice to feel that somebody else has that sort of faith in your ability which is hugely encouraging and I think that certainly in my case I respond well to that sort of thing and I'm then I find that I'm encouraging my guys to do courses to try and up their level of skills and I'm getting feedback from them and they are responding very, very positively to this as well – that way it's working out well.

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With regard to specific HR skills training I think most managers would benefit from a certain level of training but I think that to put an onus or a weight on their shoulders beyond that would be to detract from their main job which is production. So I mean there's a fine line really between where a manager's responsibility with regard to HR end and where HR's begins.

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T: And do you feel you are slowly taking on more of a HR role in your job or do envisage this element of your job increasing over time?

1810 L2: There certainly is that potential and I don't know where that will go – wonder if there is a strategy there to keep loading and loading on managers to see if they can ultimately get rid of people in HR.

1815 **T: Do you feel you have more information available to you now in relation to your staff?**

L2: Well we kept fairly good records of absence, sick leave, all leave etc etc so that information was always available to us – I actually prefer having it on peoplesoft because there's less likelihood of making a mistake – it's easier and there's less case for argument.. people can't turn around then and say I didn't have this and I didn't have that – It's there it's recorded. I feel also people are less likely to abuse this type of system when everything is so well recorded and well kept. Not saying that people did ever abuse it but there's less likelihood now. There could be a case though that people really feel it's a case of big brother watching over them now. I don't mind it but I'd be
1820 interested to hear what other people's views were on people using it. I only have a few people in my area so I don't mind taking the time to input the information but if I had a staff of 30 or 40 people or more I'd probably be driven demented.

1830 **T: To wrap up what do you think have been the advantages and disadvantages of the decentralised structure?**

L2: The advantages are definitely that everybody has to stand on their own two feet – there is a greater focussing on what everyone's specific objectives and goals are; there's a far greater awareness of costs

1835 The disadvantages are a lot of the support mechanisms that used to be central are now having to be expanded into all the various areas because all areas now need their own HR, IT, Finance and all sort of other back up structures but overall I think it's been a good move, a positive move. I think the way I tend to look at this is if this was my
1840 company, if I was depending on the euro in my pocket from the profits of this organisation made I would probably pick a structure similar to this and it's sort of a policy I use when I'm viewing every aspect of work that I'm doing and it's a statement I've made when people come to talk to me and they are asking me to do various things I will ask them if this was your business would you do it this way and suddenly they look
1845 at it from a different perspective! It's a simple way of looking at things.

But I think that overall the advantages to the organisation are certainly that the individual IBD's have to stand on their own two feet and suddenly they are very, very focused on their own requirements. That might be a disadvantage as well in that they are so focused on their individual requirements and needs that they forget that are part
1850 of an overall structure and one of the very interesting things that we've had on the recent managers course was that we had managers from all over the organisation – there were about twenty of us on the course and it was great to hear that people from other parts of the organisation were faced with exactly the same sort of problems that I'm faced with on a day to day basis.. different product, similar problems. And the

problems tend to be how do I get the most out of my staff and getting them to behave responsibly and have a good work ethic and we're all looking for the ideal person and probably if we found them life would be so boring! I wouldn't mind a bit of boredom sometimes though! But that was very good to see. Afterwards I was thinking that we got so much feedback ourselves and so much information from each other that I felt that it would be good to have some level of follow through on it – we've gotten a fair bit of information that I have implemented some of and it's been great for me. In casual conversation with other managers I've been saying well have you had a chance – and they're like well no not really and then I say well I have and it's going great for me but I think it would have been interesting if we had set up a structure say three months after that where that same group of twenty people got together again and say what was your experience of that and what was your experience of this – that would have been interesting to see.

As part of the external courses I read a book on Toyota and they would be seen as one of the world's best producers and have the best production techniques of any company in the world and every other major organisation is trying to copy their standards and their ethics and one of the things that Toyota do is that they say every grouping in the organisation is a constantly renewing experiment and their experiment is that at the end of every month they need to go back to their manager and say 'I've found two new ways of actually doing this better.' And then the manager's role is then to look and see are these two ways valid – can we implement them – put them in as an experiment and if they work keep them and if they don't bin them. And that's what they do... it's just a constant strive to improve and improve and improve. I mentioned this at the managers course and I also mentioned to my staff about Toyota but when I first mentioned it to them they looked at me like I had two heads **but** within two weeks two of them had come back to me with two separate suggestions – now one of them wasn't fantastic but the other one was and we acted on it and you know the rewards are coming back. Also the confidence is there now that if my staff come up to me I won't just say to them it's not your position to be suggesting changes... It's simple stuff like that.

One of the other HR type issues we also learned was in relation to feedback, positive feedback. They gave us formulas that you can work by that can help you work through various difficult situations or difficult circumstances and it's probably management by formula which isn't wonderful but some of the smaller things are so simple that they really work when dealing with a situation and teaching you to remain calm and having respect for people regardless rather than just losing the head. It also helps if you have good staff which I feel I do.

T: So do you think this has been a positive change for RTE?

L2: I do I genuinely do. In fact it's hard to find negatives – my fear would be that if one part of the organisation was not carrying its weight it would be shipped off or sold off and then there is the potential for an absolute break-up of the organisation which wouldn't be great at all and overall all it's been very good move for RTE.

Interview Ends

Transcript of interview with L3

T: Are you aware of the current structure that is in place in RTE?

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L3: I am yes.

T: Why do you think this restructuring was necessary for RTE?

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L3: Well I mean there's all sorts of reasons I suppose – at the time the organisation was going through a pretty difficult financial situation and there was a real imperative to make substantial changes to the way RTE was run but also to be seen to be making these changes and also there was the whole issue of the new licence fee, the need for all structures to be more open than they were before and for people to have a much clearer understanding of how the organisation was run so I mean it was a time of great change and this area was probably one of the more important ones, to reorganise the organisation in such a way that everyone could see how things were run and who was responsible for what whereas before when it was all one big corporate mass if you like you never knew what part of the organisation was making money and what part of the organisation was losing money.

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T: Who was the driving force behind this?

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L3: I don't honestly know because I mean I wouldn't have been part of making that decision. I don't believe that the driving force was external I think it may have been in response to pressures from external but it was very much an Executive Board decision that this was the way they were going.

T: What do you feel the role of the decentralised team in your IBD is?

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L3: Well I suppose the real difference is that before you dealt with one person in what was then the Personnel Department who might have been dealing with several other areas so you weren't dealing with somebody whose sole responsibility was this one business division and it meant that you didn't have the follow through that you do now, you didn't have the people who fully understood exactly why we do things the way we do because our jobs all involve, well when I say us I mean the Managing Editors, our jobs essentially are about editing and managing resources but there are all kinds of areas that you drift in and out of such as Industrial Relations, HR issues, managing staff, recruitment, legal issues, all kinds of things. It's much better structured now when you know who the person is and when the person is part of your division and who takes responsibility for things that in the past were probably shared between two or three different people rather than having one person focussed on them.

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T: Do you think that one person contact is a positive or negative thing for employees?

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L3: Oh I think it is definitely a positive thing- absolutely, there's no doubt. It's much that you know who the person is and you can establish a relationship with that person rather than not knowing who it's going to be, it might be a different person

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each time, you have to re-explain the situation when you deal with a new person and you might have reached an understanding with one person and the other person takes a different view. I think it is much better to have the one person contact.

1955 **T: And do you think it is clear in the IBD who the designated HR team for News IBD are?**

1960 L3: I think so. Absolutely yea and obviously it's a case that the longer it goes on the more people will become clearer – people get used to it then. I suppose the real difference in its simplest terms is that in the past if you had a problem you would have raised it with Personnel whereas now you raise it with your HR team so there's actually a human person there to deal with it.

1965 **T: What level of involvement should HR have in managing News IBD – Do you think they should be involved at the strategic level or just be there as an administrative support for managers?**

1970 L3: I don't really have a view because part of the way that News is organised is that there is a lot of overlapping of responsibilities anyway and a lot of these things evolve rather than being decided upon at the outset so I'm not really sure how you would define a greater managerial role for HR – If you were saying to me specifically should the HR person do the rosters – there's one half of me that would say yes please because it would take an awful administrative burden off my shoulders but in fact I think not because the rostering is very much a part of the editorial process because you know who is strong in what areas and also because we tend to be pretty hands on managers it is important that we do those kind of things that have a direct impact on the programme.

1980 **T: What do you feel are the particular benefits of having a decentralised HR team?**

1985 L3: It's the point of contact but it is also the level of expertise that is built up in that you have somebody who is dealing on a regular basis with the issues that are common to the News Division so therefore they have a greater understanding whereas in the old regime you might have had someone who was used to dealing with totally different sets of issues that say would arise in television where people are employed on a different basis and the whole way it is run is completely different from a newsroom.

1990 **T: Do you think the decentralised structure is preferable to the previously centralised structure?**

1995 L3: I do. I suppose at the beginning I was kind of 'wait and see'. But absolutely I think it works much better. I don't know whether it saves the organisation any money because we now have three people which is quite a lot of people really so I don't know if you were doing an audit of the organisation whether you could prove it has saved money but I think it has made for a much more efficient way of doing the business.

T: What is your understanding of the role of Corporate HR?

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L3: Frankly I am a little mystified – I know very little! I suppose that is one of the effects of having a HR presence in the Division. That's the person who I would have all my dealings with. I have frankly never met the Director of Human Resources – I don't even know what he looks like – I'm not saying he wasn't doing a wonderful job but I never came across him which certainly in the old regime you would have certainly come across the Director of Personnel regularly.

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I certainly haven't found that I have dealt with them at all – there are issues that straddle all of the organisation like Health and Safety – you would meet the person who deals with that but by and large all your dealings are with the local HR team.

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T: All of the decentralised HR teams do have a dotted line reporting structure back to Corporate HR – Do you feel that line is necessary?

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L3: I know very little about it but yes I do feel it is necessary because otherwise I suppose the downside for decentralisation would be that you could have totally different experiences in different business divisions. You could have the Radio HR team doing things in a completely different way to HR News and that would cause problems when people inevitably moved between the divisions and encountered different structures and different ways of dealing with things. So yes there has to be some kind of a machine to make sure that everything is consistent throughout the organisation – how it works I don't know but yes I can see the need for it.

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T: What impact, if any, has the changed structure had on you and your role – or would you see any change at all?

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L3: Not specifically HR moving into the News Division but the other changes have certainly changed my role a lot and to the detriment. When I first started in my role I suppose the editorial side of the job would have been about 60% of the work and the management side would have been about 40 and they are now more than reversed. But still the most important part of the job still is the editorial – you have to make sure that the output you are responsible is at the standard that gives News its reputation, that gives us listeners and earns us revenue. Now all managers in News would say that they spend far more time on management issues but it is not even serious management but it's almost kind of petty administration – there's so much to be done with peoplesoft and all these things which frankly I cannot see the point of taking somebody who is on the level that we are on and expecting them to do really low grade administrative work which takes up an awful lot of time. Firstly you come in in the morning and you might spend an hour going through your worklist and that is an hour that isn't spent on worrying about whether Morning Ireland got this story right or that story right or whether you've got enough people to cover the President Bush visit or whatever it is. So yea that has been a big change and I suppose it is inevitable because we've got fewer people in the organisation and the work is being spread around the people who are left but there is a high level of what I would call low grade administrative work. But still it's the editorial aspect of the job that is the most important. The editorial aspects are what you are going to be judged on at the

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2050 end of the day, not whether you've recycled 400 PeopleSoft requests or whatever – it's how well the output is performing.

T: As a result of rolling out PeopleSoft do you feel you have more information on your staff now?

2055 L3: I don't, no I don't – I mean maybe in some ways the old fashioned systems may have been better and I find I would always have known who was where and what they were doing from the rosters but they're now if you like duplicated by what is done on PeopleSoft so I don't really think I know anything more about my staff – the only exception to that is in terms of annual leave and sick leave where there is no doubt but
2060 we do know more than we would have before. I know we had a system there before but I don't know if anyone put all the bits together to see what they actually meant so I do think you can now get a quick view on whether there's a problem with somebody who's regularly sick or you know whether people have built up enormous stacks of TOIL or Annual Leave so that's one area in which it is useful.

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T: What do you see as your HR role now as a result of decentralisation?

L3: Well the sort of HR issues that would come through me would be and that doesn't mean that they would be dealt with me exclusively, they might well be shared
2070 with or passed on to Head of HR News would be fairly obvious stuff, Industrial Relations issues, the holding of local partnership meetings, dealing with disciplinary issues, personal problems people might have or if these problems were affecting people's work – those kind of problems would come to me initially. They'd obviously be referred to HR to make sure one deals with them in the proper way but they would be
2075 the main HR issues. I don't know if you would consider things such as rostering and assigning staff and identifying talent, moving that talent along, moving people into different areas where you think it will be more beneficial for them or you think you will get more out of them those kind of issues which are ongoing, they happen every single day and they are just part and parcel of what you do but I suppose you could call them
2080 HR issues.

T: Do you think that the people management aspects of your job should be set as specific objectives for you?

2085 L3: It probably would be useful if they were actually defined for you. Again an awful lot of what we do in the newsroom because of the nature of news is keeping the engine going, it's not really establishing targets and saying we are going to do seven stories a day instead of six stories a day or say we are going to have five headlines on the 6.01 instead of four. It's not like that – it's trying to find the best way of turning
2090 around the stories that are there so it is quite hard to identify targets but you do some things in programming like you might say you want to find more programming for young people or we want to find better ways of addressing regional issues – I mean those are specific targets that you can decide on.

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T: Where does the HR aspects of your job figure on your list of priorities?

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L3: There are very important – one of the pleasures of the job is seeing people you brought into the organisation, watching them develop, seeing them move into different areas and acquire new skills and where they move on and seeing people enjoying their job more and more and moving on further and that's presumably a HR issue but it is part and parcel of management and it's part and parcel of the job you find yourself doing on a daily basis and it is one of the most important things. At the end of the day the newsroom is a better place and we do the job better if we have people who are more skilled and who are more motivated by doing the job that they enjoy doing and by and large most journalists like doing their job and the issue is not to try to get people to do more work because they want to do more work – it's an ego thing, they want to get on-air and they want to hear their voice on the radio and see their face on the television so the issue is not to get them to do the work, the issue is to get them to do the work better, more accurately, more comprehensively and then to make the output stronger.

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T: Do you feel you've received sufficient training and support to carry out the HR aspects of your role?

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L3: It's hard to answer that because I don't think I have ever had any formal training on any of those issues. I suppose on the legal side, yes, as that's part of being a journalist you'd go to various things and we do have legal refreshers, which I would be part and parcel of anyway. But in terms of the HR issues I don't think I personally have ever had any training but I am not looking for anything in particular. I think part of it is the experience of being in the job a long time and dealing with difficult issues and getting them right and sometimes getting them wrong and learning from the ones where you make the mistakes and moving on. We have periodic management training which I am not that convinced is that useful quite frankly – I know it is a couple of days out of the office which is always healthy to make you think about the way you do things. But I am not sure at the end of the day that I would sit down at the end of the day and say yea that was a great course and it taught me a, b and c.

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T: Do you think you are adequately rewarded for taking on the HR aspects of your role?

L3: I think they would be very much part and parcel of the package and it is recognised as potentially one of the most difficult aspects of the job. Yea.

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T: From your point of view what have been the advantages and disadvantages for RTE of the decentralised structure?

L3: Well I mean we are different from the other IBD's in that we don't have a revenue stream so Radio and Television can now have a fair better idea of what they do and what money they earn and what kind of a business they're running. We are not like that, we have a service level agreement with both Radio and Television; we provide services, we earn money for the organisation but it doesn't come into the Newsroom, it goes to either Radio or Television so in that sense you can't look at the newsroom and say that it is a business that earns 'x' amount of money or whatever.

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2150 But certainly it is better to have a reasonably autonomous division that you are more responsible for because it is very easy when you are part of a big corporate structure to sort of let things slip – and oh well somebody else will be sorting that out. But when you are in charge of your own area and you know exactly where your parameters are you have a much better idea of how things are run. Frankly the newsroom, rightly or wrongly, was always pretty autonomous – we were always fairly separate as a division so it hasn't necessarily made that much difference in terms of the way the newsroom is run on the floor. It has made a difference having HR in the Newsroom and having Finance in the Newsroom and I would see the two as being very similar. We certainly have more financial information than we've had before and we have far more regular updates and we have a monthly look at our figures now so we can say 'oops the casual budget is getting a bit tight' so at least at that stage you can address it whereas before, 2160 once a year you'd get some kind of financial statement when it was probably too late to do anything about it so on that level it is very useful.

T: Do you think overall it's been a success for RTE – I appreciate this hasn't been measured by the organisation but what is your impression?

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L3: For RTE I think it certainly has and for the newsroom I suspect it has had more of an impact in other areas than it has had in the newsroom but I think overall it has been very good. You can see it now in terms of you know Radio now has its own marketing area and sales area and that has to be good for Radio rather than their being a 2170 centralised Sales area, which sells ads for both radio and television. You know if somebody is going out selling a specific product rather than selling the RTE brand name; which is going to this part of the organisation or that part of the organisation so I think that has to be good.

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Interview ends

Transcript of Interview with C1

2180 **T:** To what extent do you feel there has been a deliberate policy to devolve HR Activities to the line?

C1: I think the policy was fairly deliberate. It certainly had been in the air for a while so I think people at the top level were thinking about it and it certainly was thought
2185 about for a long time before it actually happened. So I'd say it was a fairly deliberate strategy.

T: Ok. And who do you feel was the driving force behind this restructuring?

2190 **C1:** I'm not quite sure but probably the Executive Board would have driven it you know, in particular when the new people came on board – I'm not quite sure if that was before transformation or after transformation but certainly there are people there now, the new DG, Cathal Goan, and the CFO, Director of Communications, people like that would have to some extent anyway, especially the last two people who came in from the
2195 outside where I think they would have looked at an organisation that was highly centralised and said that was a bad thing. And that it's a good thing to have decentralisation so I think to a large extent they would have driven it and they got done. Transformation would have talked about flexibility and less people you know doing, getting more from less in other words, less people doing more and better work so
2200 it would have been seen as a way to get at that.

T: Do you feel then that this was an external solution proposed for our internal problem?

2205 **C1:** Yea

T: So do you feel therefore the newcomers to the organisation influenced the changed structure of the organisation?

2210 **C1:** Yea I think the external people always bring in different ideas and am it's not that this is a revolutionary idea; decentralisation, because it is out there in the literature a little bit and the business literature and other companies have done it as well so am yea I'd say as well as the new people coming in and having this idea in their heads I think there were external influences and transformation was a reaction to that. And also the
2215 decentralisation I suppose was a reaction to that. Like basically I think that the people at the top would have seen and perhaps consultants and perhaps the government would have seen RTE as a bureaucracy overloaded at the top, too many people in the centre and not enough people making programmes, making the core product so that would have become, if you like, an accepted truth and therefore people would have said in
2220 order to break down the bureaucracy and get more people doing the real work of the business am we will discard the centre as much as we can or squash it down to as small a unit as possible and that way we will achieve flexibility and better cost control. An example of that is the training department as you know was literally done away with raised to the ground and that was seen as a good thing.

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T: And how would you describe what has happened?

2230 **C1:** I think it has, well what has happened is that yea, decentralisation has occurred to a good extent as you know, I don't have to tell you, each IBD has its own HR function so I think that has happened and that's a fact am so in essence to answer your question decentralisation to a large extent has occurred.

2235 **T:** What, from your point of view, have been the advantages and disadvantages of this change.

C1: Well let's look at the advantages first. I think it has achieved flexibility and it has made each IBD more conscious that it can make its own decisions within the overall budgets set for them so that's probably a good thing and remember it's not just HR that was devolved you know it was IT, Sales, Finance as well so in that scenario I think it has been a good thing, sorry it has been an area where people now believe they have more flexibility to act in a more business like way and they can tailor local solutions to local problems so I think that's probably a good thing. Am that's probably the advantages.

2245 The disadvantages are not so much, I just don't know financially whether it weighs up because am there are teams in each IBD so there may be duplication going on or triplication going on because there are teams in each IBD and there are also people in the centre still so the costs – I don't know if anyone has ever analysed it but I suspect that the cost savings are not great – the savings may be more in flexibility than in cost.

2250 **T:** Just now you mentioned the Corporate Centre, what is the current role of Corporate HR?

2255 **C1:** That's unclear and that's something that hasn't been worked out. I think it's unclear. I think we've had.... Since, except for one period when decentralisation was starting off just during transformation we had one director of HR who then became downgraded I suppose to Head of HR and then left and since then we had a person just on contract if you like a consultant, that's Tom and he has also left and so to that extent I think the centre has been downgraded and I think it's role is unclear and I think this needs to be worked out. For the moment what it's doing is the regulatory stuff such as Health and Safety and Pensions am some IR and some training and development that can best be done from the centre such as management development. But I think the Jury is out on that; the role seems to be unclear.

2265 **T:** And in relation to the HR Director do you feel that should be one of their main aims when they join the organisation – to bring a focus to the role of the HR Centre? What should the new HR Director promote when they do come in? In other words what do you think the focus of the HR Centre should be?

2270 **C1:** I'm not sure because well I have my opinion but everybody will have their own opinion on this- On the one hand there's no point in having decentralisation and all the costs involved in that if you always retain a heavy central core. On the other hand there's no point in having decentralisation if you lose the benefits of having a co-ordinating role for the centre so I think it's a question of trade offs and now you asked me my opinion I haven't seen what's going on and having had some

experience of decentralisation to date I think there is a role for the centre I think the centre should be small, core but I think there is a co-ordinating role to be done in the centre, you know leaving aside the legal requirements and regulatory issues, there's still a role for for instance co-ordinating recruitment and how we recruit, our policies and procedures on how we recruit; the overall direction of IR needs to be looked at because the Unions are organisation wide, they don't just live within IBD's. Am training, that can be best done from the centre and development, we've already said that, for instance the performance development system is probably best administered and so on from the centre but I know that's beginning to fall apart in the IBD's people are beginning to adopt their own systems. So in essence I think there is a role for a slimmed down centre still the centre hasn't died and looks like it won't fade away and as far as I can tell I think that is the feeling of the Director General as well. He sees a role for the centre. It's an interesting point. It's as if the organisation doesn't trust if I can use that term, doesn't trust the individual IBD's totally to go their own way and so they still need a restraining hand on them now and again and I would imagine that's fairly common out there.

T: In saying that, in your opinion how consistently do you think policies have been implemented throughout the organisation to date – would you have a concern about consistency?

C1: I would have a concern. I think some policies are easier to administer than others and apply than others. For instance Health and Safety people seem to accept by and large organisation wide; people seem to go, not totally but a good bit of the way, that management development should be organisation wide. For instance there's a feeling that people have a lot in common and can benefit from attending a training course or moving around the organisation that can develop people. Performance Management and reward systems – well we haven't been at this for long enough but I suspect there are anomalies arising that the centre will have to look at, at some stage and think there's unevenness out there in how our reward bonuses and benefits are applied – I suspect there's a breakdown there.

T: And would you feel then that there's a lack of control over the decentralised HR staff?

C1: Well again it's a question of getting the balance right – I don't think there's a lack of control over them but there's always you know we no longer have the centre now so we no longer have that piece of bureaucracy and we no longer have the centre having a huge amount of power simply because it's so big and its always had that power so I think the centre's role is now... well it has to earn its pay so to speak so as somebody who is based in the centre for instance if we don't come up with good management development policy and implement that by formal training courses and so on then we don't get the respect and don't have the power so that's a change that has come about.

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2330 **T: And just if I could remain on the subject of the relationship between centralised and decentralised HR - there is a dotted line reporting structure in place - how strong do you feel that line is?**

2335 **C1:** I think it's strong in some ways and in some ways it's not - Most of the IBD's have a strong reporting relationship back to the centre. I think my experience has been is that HR value the line that they have back into the centre but remember it doesn't just come through the centre, it comes to the centre and it goes back out to their colleagues in the line if you know what I mean so they can talk to each other and they can discuss policies and get I suppose reassurance and validation that they are working in the right way and that they can share problems and experiences so I most of the HR value that and think it's a useful dotted line. I certainly think that's the case, I'm not so sure if the line managers in the IBD's value that dotted line as much - there's a tension there I think.

2340 **T: And do you feel from your position being in the HR centre do you feel that dotted line should be stronger or weaker?**

2345 **C1:** I think it's got to remain a dotted line for the moment anyway - I don't think it should be a straight line and I think that's a good thing. I think strangely though one of the roles of the centre was to champion the employees, reference Ulrich is it?

2350 **C1:** I think that role is probably not so well performed now out in the decentralised areas because there are possibly too close to management to be seen by the employees at times as being independent I think there's a role there for the centre as being more independent and play an independent role. That's something I didn't expect to see, I didn't notice happening initially but I think that has happened.

2355 **T: And do you think then that is again as a result of the reporting structure to the IBD in the first instance and then just a dotted line reporting back to central HR so decentralised HR feel a stronger pull towards management in the IBD?**

2360 **C1:** Yea I do which leads on to another observation I'd make is that the decentralisation process has led to a more human resources approach in the academic sense to personnel matters than was the case before. I think decentralisation has meant that employees are seen much more as part of the economic resources of the organisation whereas in the past when we had a strong central hr function ok certainly it was more administrative and more bureaucratic but I think the central core could represent the employees more strongly than it does now, it could and it did whether that was good or bad it was a mute point. But that is an observation I'd make.

2365 **T: What issues if any do line HR refer back to the centre on and what issues if any should they refer back on?**

2370 **C1:** I think that's a good question - I think they tend to refer back to the centre on issues of IR for instance at the highest level because there is a certain expertise and a memory, a folklore memory in the core still that they tend to make use of and IR tends

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to be a lonely pursuit at times so I think it's a natural move, it's almost like gravity that people come back to the centre to get some advice. That tends to be referred here. Obviously then Health and Safety, Management Development that tends to get referred here, Performance Management *tends* to get referred here. Obviously pensions and the like gets referred back here. Sometimes then bullying and harassment issues will be referred here because sometimes local management will be too close to deal with those issues. So what doesn't get referred back here often is, and what would have been dealt with here in the past, is recruitment and selection tends to be autonomous, they do it themselves. Increments, pay rises and probation reviews, administrative things, they do that themselves we tend not to be involved or concerned about that.

T: And do you think there's anything that decentralised HR don't refer back on that really should be referred back to the centre or that the centre really should be involved in ?

C1: Well I think I mentioned before performance management – that's not co-ordinated as it should be in my opinion I think that the organisation has a lot to gain by having a coherent and organisation wide policy on performance management because one of the key strategies we're trying to implement is to become a performance organisation, to have a performance culture and I'm not so sure if we can do that if we have an independent approach to performance management but that's just what I think.

T: Next section I would like to touch on is the views of line managers and how you feel they've adopted hr activities as part of their responsibility? So To what extent do you feel HR activities have been successfully devolved to the line?

C1: I think not very successfully – I think the line has been reluctant to take on hr roles - they still see HR as belonging to HR not to them. And that's it in a nutshell. I think some roles they've had to take on out of necessity such as peoplesoft, such as you know working on peoplesoft and inputting information into peoplesoft – they've had to do that and performance management to some extent. They've done that but that's early days yet for both of those things so let's put that caveat in there. But I know what comes back to me from the line managers, from being involved with them in training and development is they do feel aggrieved, and I know you will be talking to other people on this, but that they feel that a lot of their time is now taken up with HR work, as they see it not being their work and that their 'real work', as they see it is getting neglected. We did shake out, during Transformation a lot of administrative staff who might have taken on this role and I think there is a longing to have some administration people taken back and I think that is somewhat of an irresistible force. And I think that will happen as we go on. I think we have possibly given some line managers too much to do. And I think we need to look at that again, too much HR administration work to do.

T: And do you think for the work they've been expected to take on they've received appropriate training and support?

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C1: Well funny you should ask that but we did a survey, and they said that the most line managers (just on the performance issues) have a reasonable understanding of the system and have implemented it reasonably well but they do overwhelmingly say that they require more training in the system and we intend providing that now. Within a couple of months.

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They feel they have received enough training in the IT aspects of hr training – they are happy that they know peoplesoft and they are happy that they know agresso but they probably need more training and we did provide a lot of training for most managers well a five day training course really and they were very interested in the legal aspects of employment law and disciplinary procedures and bullying and harassment, all of those things. So even if there is a not a hunger out there for those sort of things by managers there is certainly an appreciation of it when it's offered to them.

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T: And is something that we anticipate will be rolled out to all managers that they'll get this level of training?

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C1: Yes I think by the end of this programme we'll certainly have given, or at least offered this training to all managers of people in the organisation. That's probably about 100 managers.

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T: And also do you feel managers are rewarded for taking on HR responsibilities?

Is reward used to encourage take up of these activities?

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C1: Under Transformation managers received payment for being more flexible and so on so monetarily they got rewarded for it but I certainly don't think they feel they've been rewarded sufficiently for it – they feel it's a burden imposed on them. They might accept it philosophically that it's a good a thing to do but I think they have a difficulty in taking this on in addition as they would say to their real job.

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T: What activities do you spend most of your time on and do you feel this is how your time is best spent?

C1: I think personally speaking I've got to do more high level work strangely enough which pleases me because I've stopped doing administration work which is good – Basically because these are the roles that are being done in the centre and I think that's a good role for the centre. When I say high level tasks I mean I did some work on the management training and development programme – I further developed the policy on designated contact people – that's in relation in bullying and harassment. I've also been involved in performance management organisation wide, so I have found good satisfaction in that but talking to my HR colleagues out in the line I think they would say, or at least most of them would say they have too much administration work to do and they dislike that element – you know it's not what they've trained for, it's not what they are qualified for, its not what they like doing but it seems to be never ending.

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T: So do you feel when you move to the more generalist role you're moving away from the profession.

2480 **C1:** That seems to be the case. When you think back to when the core was large it worked as you might remember, well it seems funny now by having a row of offices inhabited by personnel executives and outside of that sat a lot of secretarial or administration people mainly females. So that's how it was but it looks funny looking back on it now but the administration work was largely carried out by administrative staff not really done by the personnel executives. But when we devolved a lot of the
2485 clerical people left on packages and the executives were mostly devolved to the line but also some of the administrative HR people who are studying and so on and who are ambitious to work in HR were also devolved whether they liked it or not and rather than going up the ladder and doing more management type work or more interesting type work ended up doing more administrative work and that's been an unfortunate
2490 development from the point of view of the HR people. That's what I hear people saying to me anyway.

T: Overall just to wrap up this interview in your opinion has decentralisation been a success or failure for RTE?

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C1: I have to say not trying to avoid the question but I don't think it's a case of either success or failure I'd certainly think it's happened – so to that extent it's been a success you know if you like because it has been implemented. I think it's uneven. I think we need two things funnily enough I think we do need a decentralised HR
2500 function but we also need to retain the core HR so if I could say the two things – I think we need both. And I don't think it's set in stone either – maybe when the organisation has gotten through it's really tough times and it may be emerging just now – maybe a case may be made for recentralising -- I wouldn't dismiss that because what goes around comes around.

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Interview ends

Transcript of Interview with C2

2510 **T: What is the current role of Corporate HR?**

C2: Well that is a very good question! (laughs) I suppose it is to maintain standards and consistencies across the IBD's. Well that is the aim – or where the focus should be.

2515 **T: And is that what the focus of your work would be on at present?**

C2: No, I haven't got enough time and also I just get caught up in day to day issues and there are a lot of policy issues that haven't been decided upon or resolved so it is very difficult to give people advice on them then. I think there is no focus on what the
2520 role is from a corporate point of view.

T: So what would you feel you spend most of your time on – I have a list of activities that I will call out and if you could indicate if you spend any, some or all of your time on these activities.

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T: HR Administration

C2: A bit, not a lot.

2530 **T: Updating your own HR Knowledge**

C2: Not enough!

T: Providing support to line managers

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C2: Not enough as well but it would still be an element of my role.

T: Providing specialist HR input to wider business issues

2540 **C2:** Not majorly, no.

T: Developing HR strategy and policy

C2: I don't develop it but I do try to push it.

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T: Implementing HR policies

C2: I suppose on a day to day basis but just like everyone else would really.

T: Do you think this is how your time is best spent?

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C2: No I think corporately we need to put more time into actually looking at the other IBD's but to look at the policies and like say the big area I would say is

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compensation and look at how it is applied differently across the organisation because I would say it is very different. That type of thing.

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T: Now if I could touch on the dotted line reporting structure the decentralised HR teams have back to Corporate HR – How strong do you think that line is at present?

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C2: It's not – I actually think some people in the decentralised HR teams like to have it. It's more of a reference point – we mightn't always have the answer but then we can go find the answer and then at least then it is the corporate answer and it goes to all the IBD's. It's not so much a reporting line, it's more of an advisory role.

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T: And from your point of view, would you prefer that link to be stronger or weaker?

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C2: Stronger from the systems point of view because I don't feel at present I have the right to go in and check what people have done on the system but at the same time I am responsible for its accuracy. So if it's not right it comes back to me.

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I think it should be stronger also say for example when we look again at compensation and we see that managers are paying that they shouldn't be paying we should really be able to say centrally that it's not on, end of story and that they can't just say we are our own IBD, we can pay what we want.

T: And do you feel that you have that level of influence to say no, you shouldn't be doing that?

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C2: No I can check it and investigate it here but it needs to go to a higher level then to be acted on – I think that is wrong because it should be able to be dealt with from the centre but I think it will only be heard if it goes up a level within the organisation.

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T: What issues, if any, do decentralised HR refer back to Corporate HR on?

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C2: A lot of tax questions and clauses in relation to independent contractor and sole trader contracts. We get a lot of tax queries because that also links with corporate Finance. Then lots of queries on all aspects on HR issues, legal issues but it is kind of policy issues in general.

T: Is there a fear that some decentralised HR teams have or will 'go native'? Is there any way of minimising the impact of that happening.

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C2: They have I suppose and I think that is because the decentralised teams got conflicting information – in the beginning they were told to come back to get sign off on a number of issues and then they were being told they weren't to refer back to the centre at all so they were very much led to believe they were to operate as a separate function. There are different attitudes now from everyone on what should and should not be referred back into the centre. So now no-one is really auditing what is going on.

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Now of course it is up to the Heads of each IBD to ensure the policies are

enforced but it is hard to know if that is going on or not. Though there is a different pressure on the decentralised HR teams because it is the Managing Director of the particular IBD that is their boss at the end of the day.

T: And do you think that impacts negatively then on the level of influence you can have over the teams?

C2: Yea. At the end of the day the person can turn around to us and say well my boss is..... so that just highlights that the dotted line reporting structure isn't really there. It's fiction really isn't it.

T: Want to look at the whole area of Consistency of HR policies across the organisation

Cross Divisional communication and information sharing -- how effective do you think it has been?

C2: It's terrible and I would say it's awful because the plan we had was that the Heads of HR would have their meeting and that was then to filter down to the rest of the members of the HR teams and that doesn't seem to have happened. We are starting next week to have meetings in Corporate HR. But at the minute the only way you find out information is at coffee and if you don't go to coffee you don't find out. You only have informal routes and so people really are losing out and therefore dealing with things very differently.

I think the information sharing should be more formalised because when it doesn't happen things get missed and there is good discussion and debate on issues so it's a pity it doesn't filter down but also I feel there are lots of issues out there that are constantly being discussed but never finalised or agreed on.

T: Who do you think should be setting the agenda for HR or should there be, do you think a clearer picture of what the role of Corporate HR should be?

C2: The role was never defined. At once stage when I was part of a decentralised team (Teresa originally worked as a HR Generalist in TV IBD) it was felt that Corporate HR was eventually going to disappear and then it kind of swung back that Corporate HR should have some level of control over the teams but I think there is nothing in place to say what Corporate HR is about. I think particularly in relation to training and development there should be one way that RTE applies to everyone trained and there's a strength in looking at things from a company wide perspective.

Also I notice that even the way one decentralised HR team approaches an issue may not be how another feels something should be done but at the end of the day they say nothing because really their only concern is their own particular IBD. And it's not really for them to be contradicting others either.

T: How do you think Corporate HR can add value to the organisation?

C2: Definitely looking at all the contracts again and the way contracts are issued because we are all very unclear and on the guidelines we need to follow. There is a lack of understanding on contracts now from a HR practitioners point of view and

there is also a lack of understanding from a manager's point of view. Line Managers have a habit of doing things and then HR having to take the blame when things go wrong for them.

I would also like to have a complete re-look at the whole area of compensation and how that is being dealt with and applied across the organisation

T: Do you think Corporate HR should be driving these type of issues?

C2: Yes definitely. There are issues that have been going around the houses for a long time and Corporate HR need to make a call on these issues. There are a lot of inconsistencies out there because of a lack of clarity on a whole range of issues but my real gripe is in relation to the whole area of compensation and how it is being applied inconsistently.

But I don't think it is a case solely of Corporate HR not knowing what their role is, I think decentralised HR can lose sight of what their role is too because they come under pressure.

T: To what extent do you feel line managers have adopted HR activities and accepted them as part of their role?

C2: Recently I would think no but that is because I am thinking of one area specifically because they won't deal with any local issues – they refer to HR on everything. They can't even do their day to day management stuff without referring to HR. But that is only one area to be honest with you. I know from the recent management training course that some managers expressed their unhappiness with having to take on, as they saw it, additional HR duties of approving leave, payments etc. but that is their job and then they're not willing to take responsibility for it – they are responsible for their budgets, for their staff so it is their job but because they need to sit in front of a computer to do it they see it as an administrative task and moan about the fact that they don't have PA's etc. The systems are in place to help them not hinder.

T: Do you think they have been given sufficient training and support to take up this role?

C2: HR activities I would definitely say no. I mean there is nowhere for them to go as a resource to get stuff, there's nothing for them. Ok they can make a phonecall but they should be able to get onto an intranet site – there should be a management information system there that outlines the procedures for hiring staff, granting pay increases, renewing contracts etc.. particularly for new managers coming in and there is no induction training course. There's nothing there to help them at all. I know the decentralised IBD gives them a run down of their staff etc but it is very limited. A lot of the things that happen in here is custom and practice.

I think managers would feel more comfortable if they had more information there – even textbook stuff on how to do a review. People may come in from the private sector where pay reviews happen just once a year so it may be a very different experience coming in here and getting used to the practices.

T: Do you think HR has lost a degree of its specialism?

2710 C2: Yea, like who would you go to on a welfare issue now internally? Having someone outside is just not the same now.

T: Do you think HR teams received sufficient training prior to moving to their new decentralised role?

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C2: Well if I look at TV because that is where I went. It was just learn it as you go along – you were mainly offered three courses and if you didn't have IR experience there was a nine day course in IBEC, or a course in the IMI on Training and Development – you had three courses to pick from and that was it. With us in TV,
2720 everything was new and you were in the line at that stage and people were busier and there was a lot more pressure and you were basically trying to learn your role from scratch and then there was no time to do training courses. You were just told you were moving and you were moving and you were to do everything and that was it. For people who worked in one particular area only that was a huge learning curve for
2725 people.

I think there is a lot of duplication in the role today. Everyone is running the same processes – it would be easier if you took the processing out of the IBD's because you spend most of the time sorting out issues on the system and then the system isn't always
2730 right.

T: Do you think HR need to move away from the day to day administrative tasks to taking on a more strategic role?

2735 C2: I don't think they are – we never stop and look at how we do things or how we could shape things or do things differently – it's just about moving the paper. And I would say that is for Corporate HR as well and it is mainly because of the time issue. You get bogged down with all the constant administrative issues whereas if that was moved back into central HR the focus of the decentralised teams could shift to the more
2740 important issues.

T: Do you think there is a case then for moving some of the people back into a centralised function?

2745 C2: I wouldn't support a full move back but maybe some of the functions or processing or operational activities could move back to the centre. Sometimes you wonder what is the point in 5 or 6 IBD's doing the same work all the time. And therefore the processes of course are being done differently. I don't know how things are going to go.

2750 Maybe we need to look at the work we've been involved in recently and question whether we should be involved in them or not.

2755 **T: Do you think HR have a strong position within the organisation at the minute?**

C2: No, I still think the whole issue of bringing people into the organisation is too loose and managers get away with it and they think they can walk all over HR then and
2760 they do so we really need to hold tight on the line.

I think the whole headcount issue is dragging us down and it's not that black and white but HR always get the blame and we were blamed for not being able to accurately determine the number of employees and that wasn't just an issue for us to take the
2765 blame for.

Also we are still very much an administrative function within the organisation.

HR now needs a real strong leader and HR really could make a significant role for
2770 themselves.

T: Do you think then this has been a successful structure for RTE?

C2: Yes I do.
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T: What do you think are the advantages?

C2: An advantage for people in the line is that they know who their HR is, that they can go to them and it is more open to staff than it was before and then sometimes you
2780 can diffuse a situation very early on if you have that contact. Also you are more clued in to the business and actually what's going on in the IBD. I think on the whole it's been an improvement but I think the decentralised teams are snowed under with administrative work and it is thankless work and you feel it is never ending. And there's no value added.

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T: Any disadvantages?

C2: Overall I don't think we are upskilling as much as we should be. You would really like to think we are pushing the agenda and that managers are feeling
2790 that we are really pushing them but I don't think we have a good name at the minute and it is also because we are not an output area so we are never going to command that level of respect.

I do think there is a problem that when you are in the line you do get sucked in to the agenda of your boss or trying to meet managers expectations and then you can lose face
2795 then when trying to comply with their needs instead of pushing your own agenda. But it is a historical thing that we always complied with managers even if we didn't agree with what they were doing.

2800 I really would look forward to the day though that HR are seen as a very dynamic function and really effecting changes within the organisation.

Interview ends.

2805 **Transcript of Interview with C3**

T: What currently is the role of Corporate HR?

2810 C3: The role of Corporate HR is to drive policy, to provide a full range of HR services to the Corporate IBD which is all the various people who are out in the other IBD's, to ensure that there is consistency in HR, and whether that is Industrial Relations, whether it is recruitment, throughout the IBD's and in Corporate HR, probably to keep abreast of legislation, to manage the PeopleSoft system, to ensure the management of our HR filing system, to deal with performance review in relation to managers in RTE and essentially in some cases to provide coaching and advice and to manage other such things particularly Industrial Relations, the IRT (Industrial Relations Tribunal) and these type of processes, to ensure the policy and procedures manual is updated and that people are aware of it, to deal with sick leave issues, particularly long term sick leave. To deal with the insurance policies and pension schemes for the organisation. I've probably left out a few but generally speaking that is the role.

T: What activities, at the moment, would you spend most of your time on?

T: HR Administration

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C3: Very little

T: Updating your own HR knowledge

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C3: Some time, through books, articles, that sort of thing but probably mostly outside of work hours.

T: Providing support for line managers

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C3: Some of my time yea, maybe 5 to 10%

T: Providing advice and support to decentralised HR teams.

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C3: A considerable amount – 30-35% of my time

T: Providing specialist HR input to wider business issues

C3: Yes I would. 5 to 10% maybe

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T: Developing HR strategy and policy

C3: Yes again 5 to 10% at least

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T: Implementing HR strategy and policy

2855 C3: Yes again 10 – 15

T: Do you feel this is the best division of your time?

2860 C3: Well I sometimes spend too much time on minutiae. I spend an awful lot of time coaching, advising, answering queries, a lot of the time from HR people both in Corporate and decentralised HR and indeed dealing with Senior Management. Often quasi-legal issues etc.

2865 **T: What do you think the main focus of Corporate HR should be?**

C3: I think it is focussing to some degree on what it should be doing. I think it should perhaps be driving strategy a little bit more and maybe trying to link in on the overall business of the organisation but the IBD's tend to do that themselves. It is really to ensure that there is consistency and that the policy that we have is being adhered to and being used consistently throughout the organisation. I think there are other projects that we will get involved in from time to time. I think mainly it is to provide the full range of services, and also to provide guidance and to ensure we are moving forward. In the IR front in particular we really have a leading role in relation to it – it is co-ordinated and it's lead from here – the policy that we have, the approach that we have and we ensure that the processes are there and Corporate HR must ensure there is consistency in the HR processes we have throughout the organisation – that includes all the processes around PeopleSoft and ensure there is consistency in relation to that.

2880 **T: In your opinion how consistently have HR policies and practices been implemented across the organisation since decentralisation?**

C3: I would have concerns that there have been some inconsistencies in relation to approaches to some aspects of HR. I think in relation to Industrial Relations matters I don't think there have been particular inconsistencies – this is mainly due to the fact that there are only a few negotiators, and there are some drawbacks to this, and these negotiators all work very closely with each other – they all worked side by side with each other in the centre at one stage, they know each other and I talk to these people at least once a day, sometimes more than once a day so they know what's going on and they come to each other and discuss issues with each other and this is very important because the Labour Court once said that RTE is a family of grades and the IBD's are not totally independent of things so it is important that that consistency is there. That doesn't mean though that can't be some little slippage here and there but people know. Also, other things that are centrally driven like pensions, there isn't any room to have inconsistencies there.

2895 But concerns would be about how people's details are recorded on the PeopleSoft system.

2900 There is a lack of overseeing in relation to that but we may be able to overcome that and Corporate HR may need to take hold of that to a greater degree to ensure that it is working properly.

Other areas, which I wouldn't be as competent as others to deal with, but I would have a sense that there is some inconsistencies in relation to the inputting of annual leave and sick leave. I have a feeling in relation to sick leave that we are not getting the inputs – it's just not the same (The inputting of sick leave information was dealt with centrally by HR until this year but has now been rolled out and is considered part of the line managers role with HR only getting involved if the levels of absences become concerning or problematic) as it used – we are going to run some reports and look at that.. It's just that we don't know what we don't have really.

In relation to contracts and stuff like that I am not so sure. I know that the Head of Corporate HR has views on that – I think Corporate HR are looking at whether some of the processing should be moved back under central control, perhaps as a shared services section or something like that but maybe maybe there is a case for that. The more people you have inputting into a system such as peoplesoft the greater the chance of inconsistency. It just causes problems from that point of view.

T: Cross divisional communication and information sharing between the various HR teams – How effective do you feel that has been?

C3: Well I think it is an area that we should look at. I had suggested in the past that we have more frequent meetings of the HR support staff even if it was only monthly. Now they may meet informally through coffee breaks etc. As you know there's a Head's of HR meeting every week – that is very useful to know what's going on and what the current issues are and some of that should filter down the HR support staff but I don't know if it does – I don't know if there are formal meetings of the decentralised teams. There certainly hasn't been one in Corporate but we have set our first meeting up for next week so we will be continuing on with that meeting into the future. It is something that I have been trying to drive for a while but that's only within Corporate HR.

I think perhaps there should be other meetings once a month or something like that so that issues that people are coming up against can be bounced off other people or experts in the area. I attended a meeting on legal / employment legislation – that was really, really worthwhile for all of the HR teams and it included people who were driving policy to people who come up against issues on a day to day basis and we able to have a really good discussion. I think it is very good to have these type of meetings from time to time.

I think there is a need for better communication definitely.

**T: Look at the Relationship between decentralised and Corporate HR
The dotted line reporting structure that exists between centralised and decentralised HR –How strong do you feel that line is at the minute?**

C3: Am, I think in many cases it is fairly strong. I think it is very important that it is quite strong. I think in some IBD's there may an attempt to deal with things in a different way but I still think it is quite strong. It may need to be further strengthened but generally speaking I think it is ok because we have the weekly Heads of HR meetings so I mean that really focuses it in.

T: Why do you think it needs to be a bit stronger?

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C3: I think it is necessary so that we all can have a system of HR that is consistent throughout the organisation bearing in the mind the fact that one has to deal with things in a certain way in a particular area but generally in policy and strategy that you have in relation to HR you should be able to do that but people going on solo runs and creating situations in areas – an area where there has been considerable inconsistency and I'm sure Head of Corporate HR would agree with me and we should be able to provide factual evidence on this is the area of performance review for management in relation to the rewards that have gone hand in hand with this and there is one IBD where I feel they have been a little bit too generous. I feel this is something that will be raised at a higher level. We do know about the spread of manager's salaries and that it might be an area that needs to be looked into in the future, maybe we need something like a dedicated compensation and benefits manager, probably not on a full time basis though but it is recognised that there are inconsistencies in the levels at which different managers in different areas should be paid. If we don't have some level of consistency in these processes the credibility of the thing will go and the really great value that is in them will be discredited and then they will fail. And we want to drill this down – I mean performance review hasn't been drilled down at all yet to all other staff and we need to try and do that. It is a very important area and it's a fact that inconsistencies could ruin the performance development system.

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T: What issues do decentralised HR tend to refer back to Corporate HR on?

C3: They come to me on issues relating to managers, legal type issues, pension issues, health insurance schemes, a wide range of industrial relations issues, policy issues, how to approach a number of issues, issues relating to welfare or even in relation to difficult individual cases and then you might go to a number of different areas in relation to that, you might refer to Corporate HR, you might go to IBEC because sometimes it's good to talk to a few people as it helps the thinking process.

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T: Is there anything Corporate HR can do as a body to minimise the impact of HR teams going native as it were?

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C3: One of the ways to minimise this is to ensure that the Heads of HR meetings continue. On the Industrial Relations side we have IRT Process Meetings every month so the HR people involved in IR attend those meetings. Sometimes, though not always I call a pre meeting to see where we are, I don't always do this and it is something that really should be happening. That will probably ensure that decentralised HR don't go native on that and those are the ones that have serious consequences because they can really impact on the rest of the organisation.

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I suppose they have to go native a bit to get themselves focussed on the business and its particular need and going a little bit native isn't too much harm anyway but having said that we can't have a situation where people go native in relation to processes, PeopleSoft and things like that and that is why communication between all HR has to be regular and formal – there is already a lot of informal communication through coffees etc but not everyone is involved in those discussions then.

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T: How do you feel line managers have adopted HR activities and included them as part of their role as part and parcel of being a line manager?

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C3: It is probable that you need to discuss this with the decentralised IBD's to get a better picture because they are much closer to it but I would feel they haven't embraced it that much. Maybe they have to a limited degree but let's face it since 1997 they were supposed to be doing these things but maybe now they are more focussed in on it and maybe they understand the processes a little bit better now. Certainly those management courses that have been I believe have been very very worthwhile and one of the areas that there is very good feedback on is the legal section of the course. And there has always been a tendency by line managers in the past to shirk away from this area. Some will take on HR roles more readily than others – it depends on the individual line manager.

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Managing and dealing with local issues as they arise that's what we are trying to get them to do. We also ran a joint training course for shop stewards and line managers and the aim was to try and get them to focus in on trying to deal with issues locally on an informal and partnership basis without always having to get HR involved.

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When decentralisation first came about and just the HR Executives had moved to the line a lot of the managers thought 'oh great here's the HR person, let's go to them, rather than dealing with the problem, go to the HR person' and there were difficulties in relation to that and particularly the HR Executives ran into serious difficulties as the demands that were put on them that were just too much and it ended up affecting them quite badly. In one case there were eighteen IR meetings in one week and all of them should really have been sorted out at local level and never been brought to the attention of the HR Executive in the area.

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T: Do you think managers are now more aware that there are certain HR aspects that go hand in hand with being a people manager in today's business?

C3: I think that based on some of the training that managers do realise they do need to take on these responsibilities but it is a bit of a rubicon for them to cross. Some of them will take on this role or will attempt to take it on but some of them don't do it very well. This is the problem and how much can you let them do it then! That's the worry. I think they do recognise though that if they are doing something they can run it by HR and that it is important that they do that kind of thing and that HR is there for them.

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T: Do you feel then that managers have gotten sufficient training and support to take on the role?

C3: I think managers have, I know we haven't trained all of them but we are concentrating on ensuring all people managers get the training. I think it is a good course and in fairness a lot of work has been put into getting this course up and running. Use some real life examples of cases etc so it is interesting and it gives people a better feel of things.

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3050 **T: What have been the advantages and disadvantages of decentralising the function?**

C3: The advantages of decentralising the function have probably been that they have helped focus the IBD and focus HR on the business of the IBD. It has allowed for
 3055 HR to be nearer to the people, perhaps more accessible to the people because they are located in the area and people can go to them and people can deal with them and people can get to know them better and from that point of view it is very good, whether it is line manager or whether it's the staff because then we are fulfilling the employee champion role better then. They can get focussed in on what things are about and get
 3060 closer to the business and I suppose it tends to bring them a little bit closer to being a business partner, now how much it does is another matter. HR is not on the boards of the IBD's and I have a view on that but I still think that they are tied into the running of the business.

3065 Now the disadvantages probably have to do with things like the processes and the fact that a group of people working together on the same thing can hold a collection of experience, knowledge and information and they can bounce off each other and this can permeate throughout rather than having to ring around for the answers – I think you lose that sense of specialism and teamwork, camaraderie. You also lose it in IR situations as
 3070 well because people are no longer physically located together – it's exactly the same really. Once you start spreading the thing out you can get a bit thin on the ground.

One of the disadvantages and maybe this is just because of the way that it has happened we have a problem in relation to Industrial Relations negotiators in that there is only
 3075 three really, maybe four but that isn't her particular background specialism. Before you could divide this out and you had backup staff there to help out too. But now that we have downsized so much there is no-one there doing that so there is no-one learning the ropes now really. It is not a problem at the moment but it is a potential problem – if someone fell ill or left we would be stuck. Now it's not insurmountable but there is no
 3080 solution jumping out at us at the minute. We took a wrong approach to it really in that everyone had to bits of stuff but this has led to difficulties really. There's a lot to be said for letting people who are skilled at doing particular jobs to be able to do particular jobs and work their skills because that is what they would have been recruited into the organisation for anyway rather than spreading around an array of work. But that is not
 3085 necessarily tied in with decentralisation – it happened more because of downsizing and we took a wrong type of approach and the chickens are coming home to roost on that now. In some ways it is a waste of skills. And it is at moments like that that I am glad that I am still working in Corporate HR!

3090 **T: Now finally, overall for RTE do you think this has been a more successful structure for RTE as opposed the previously centralised, bureaucratic structure?**

C3: I think in relation to Sales it should work well because it is very focussed, you can be very focussed on TV or Radio but I think that at the end of the day we have a
 3095 Commercial Director in TV, we have a Commercial Director in Radio, now I know at the minute we have more fire power in TV but it allows the radio people to really

focus on radio and treat it as a different product. Now whether there is economies of scale I don't know – or if there is something to be gained from being able to offer companies complete media deals

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I mean at the end of the day we are still on the site, we are still the one company, we are still the same organisation and we if we think we are all different little Republics then we are wrong and there is a disadvantage there because together we can leverage advantage. But that doesn't necessarily mean that you have to have a bureaucratic centre. It means that while recognising that they are decentralised units they have to recognise that they need to work together as an organisation.

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I don't really know about Technology – I think it's kind of okay.

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In relation to HR I think that it is a matter of seeing how it pans out. You may have some changes and you may have to pull some things back into the centre in order to leverage the advantage – I am not sure how that will happen – I think you'll find that a little bit of that anyway but I think you will always find a HR presence locally and that is worthwhile but from a process point of view, I'm not sure. I think what it has shown since decentralisation and a lot of downsizing is that really there is a need to properly fund HR and it was let go down too much. And there are difficulties still especially in relation to development and training, things like that. We are very thin on the ground but maybe we needed to go down to bring ourselves back up again. I am concerned about people getting bogged down in the whole administrative aspects of the job now.

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We'll just have to see how things pan out really.

Interview ends.

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