e-HRM Book Discussion Questions

Chapter 1

- What impact does the digital world have on today's workforce?
    - Traditionally, people expected to do the same work for the same employer as a full-time employee for most of their career. Loyalty and tenure were key determinants of career progression. Managers dictated what work was done, where, when, and how. Career management, and training and development were directed by the employer and employees were passive participants. Today in the gig economy that is characterized by a labor market consisting of freelance workers, more than a quarter of workers in Western countries are free agents without the constraints of where, when, and how to work (Lanvin, Evans, Rodriguez Montemayor, 2016, p. 11).
- Define digital HRM.
    - "Digital HRM deals with the nature, role and contribution of technology in strategically managing talent in a digital world. It incorporates social, mobile, analytics, cloud (SMAC) and other emerging technologies for efficient and effective delivery of HR services. It covers related management trends in performing the operational, relational and transformational aspects of HR, such as the devolution of HR administration via self-service applications, shared services, and outsourcing as well as strategic aspects involving evidence based on big data, predictive analytics, artificial intelligence, and managerial insights. It is also conscious of and addresses unintended consequences of technology, including implications for information security and privacy".
- Define e-HRM?
    - According to Marler and Parry (2015, p. 2), e-HRM is a set of "configurations of computer hardware, software and electronic networking resources that enable intended or actual HRM activities (e.g. policies, practices and services) through coordinating and controlling individual and group-level data capture and information creation and communication within and across organizational boundaries."
- Discuss technology's impact on various HR functions.
    - Third-party service providers, such as LinkedIn and job portals have become indispensable partners in spreading the recruitment net wide and far. Gamification of recruitment tools is another innovation that is likely to appeal to millennials, the so-called digital natives.

- Balanced score card and multisource (360-degree) performance assessment tools are being used more often. Thus, new performance management methods are employee-centric and employee-driven. Some of the digital tools include mobile applications for teams to collaborate, set goals, update goals and track progress, productivity tools for continuous feedback and improvement, and big data tools for analytics.
- As outlined in the section on career management, today individuals are the chief executive officer (CEO) of their own career. They need to adopt a *self-leadership* approach and be pro-active in managing their own careers. Many leading companies, such as GE, have created learning platforms where employees themselves create and share content.
- Today digital technologies, such as 'productivity and collaboration apps, engagement and feedback apps, performance management apps, well-being apps and employee service platforms', provide immense opportunities to engage employees and enhance the employee experience (Deloitte, 2017a, p. 56).

- What are some of the unintended consequences of Technology?

    - The digital world is dominated by two regions in the world, namely, the US West Coast and the East Coast of China, leading to digital divide and 'tremendous spillover effects on wealth, value and power' (Candelon, Reeves and Wu, 2017, p.2).
    - The introduction of new technology has not really resulted in a noticeable increase in business productivity (Deloitte, 2017a, p.3).
    - "Information overload and the always-connected 24/7 work environment are overwhelming workers, undermining productivity, and contributing to low employee engagement" (Schwarrtz et al., 2014, p. 1).
    - "Ever-increasing gap between technological sophistication and the amount of work actually performed (is resulting in) income inequality, wage stagnation, and social and political unrest around the world" (Deloitte, 2017a, p.3).
    - While technology is increasing at an exponential rate, human adaptability rises only at a slower, linear rate (Friedman, 2016) and this discrepancy is going to overpower people and fundamentally disrupt the world as we know it.
    - According to Colbert, Yee and George (2016, p. 733), in a 24/7 digital world, we may not 'find the opportunity for reflection that increases our self-awareness' and in curating our social media profile, we may tend to aim for 'an aspirational image rather than presenting an authentic self'. They further argue that these developments affect inter-personal relationships leading to 'declining levels of empathy' and blur the lines between work and non-work domains (p. 734).
    - Employees who spend a lot of time writing and answering emails tend to experience higher levels of work overload (Barley, Meyerson and Grodal, 2011).

Chapter 2

- Define strategic human resource management and the impact it has on an organization.
  - Strategic human resource management has been defined as "the pattern of planned human resource deployments and activities intended to enable an organization to achieve its goals" (Wright & McMahan, 1992, p. 298). The focus is typically on creating strategic capabilities that can lead to competitive advantage because they are valuable, rare, inimitable, non-substitutable, and able to be exploited by the firm (Barney, 1995).

- Discuss the three major theories which dominate the field of strategic human resource management.
  - The resource-based view (RBV) is a strategic management theory that has been used to explain how human resources can be a source of competitive advantage. According to RBV, competitive advantage is superior performance relative to other competitors in the same industry or superior performance relative to the industry average (Barney, 1995).
  - Human capital theory was first proposed by Becker (1964) and as applied in strategic human resource management, focused on the general skills vs. firm-specific skills distinction.
  - Social exchange theory (SET) (Emerson, 1976) proposes that when employees are treated well, they may respond by increasing their effort thereby "paying back" the firm for their good treatment.
- What environmental trends are changing the landscape for managing human resources?
  - Several environmental trends are having a significant impact on the workplace, including (1) the increasing impact of automation, especially in the form of robots broadly defined, (2) the increasing impact of artificial intelligence, (3) the increasing use of alternative work arrangements, such as part-time and gig work, (4) how organizations are blending different work arrangements and leveraging technology to achieve objectives, and (5) the digital employee experience.
- Discuss Artificial Intelligence and the impact it has on human resource management.
  - The focus of artificial intelligence is solving tasks that are easy for humans to do but hard for computers, such as planning, moving around in physical space, recognizing objects and sounds, speaking, translating, performing business or social transactions, and even doing creative work (Granville, 2017). Artificial intelligence is only beginning to diffuse into the workplace now that image classification by deep learning has achieved a 95% human accuracy threshold, and speech and text processing has achieved about 99% accuracy (which accounts for the growing number of chatbots) (Vorhies, 2017).
  - Employees no longer need to show up for work at a common location, work for a designated period (e.g., 8 am to 5 pm), and communicate and interact with other employees synchronously. Instead, most employees can work from anywhere, communicate both synchronously and asynchronously, and interact both in

person and virtually—presenting new challenges and opportunities for managing human resources.

- Discuss the relationship of e-HRM and SHRM
    - As discussed in this chapter, advances in technology, in particular automation and robots along with artificial intelligence are creating new opportunities for human resource contributions to organization success as well as new possibilities for transforming the HR function in organizations in ways that are only partially imaginable today. The greater automation of administrative tasks and increasingly distributed access to data has led to increasingly decentralized decision-making, so that HR professionals can focus on more complex, judgment-oriented, and professionally demanding tasks and responsibilities. This leads to greater professionalization and enhanced reputation of HR professionals and the HR function.

Chapter 3

- What are the key success factors for technology projects?
  - *Executive Support:* Financial and emotional backing from top management
  - *Emotional Maturity:* Soft skills, including overcoming the 'five deadly sins' of project management (as referred to in Table 3.1), managing expectations, consensus building, and collaboration
  - *User Involvement:* Involvement of the users in project decision-making and information-gathering process
  - *Optimization:* A structured means of improving business effectiveness
  - *Skilled Staff:* People who understand both the business and the technology
  - *Standard Architecture:* Integrated practices, services, and products for developing, implementing, and operating software applications
  - *Agile Proficiency:* The ability of the project team in following the agile process (see next chapter for a detailed explanation of the agile methodology)
  - *Modest execution:* Having a process with few moving parts, and those parts are automated and streamlined.
  - *Project Management Expertise:* Application of knowledge, skills, and techniques to project activities in order to meet or exceed stakeholder expectations
  - *Clear Business Objectives:* The understanding of all stakeholders and participants and project alignment with the organization's goals and strategy
- Describe the key principles behind systems thinking?
  - Squires, Wade, Dominick, & Gelosh (2011) explain further that "systems thinking is the ability to think abstractly in order to:
    - - incorporate multiple perspectives;
    - - work within a space where the boundary or scope of problem or system may be "fuzzy";
    - - understand diverse operational contexts of the system;
    - -identify inter- and intrarelationships and dependencies;
    - - understand complex system behavior; and most important of all
    - -reliably predict the impact of change to the system".
- What soft skills are needed to adopt systems perspective?
  - "Strong analytical, troubleshooting and problem-solving skills are integral to the competence of HRIS managers. When employee management software crashes, for example, the manager uses these skills to troubleshoot the software and implement appropriate solutions, as well as uses operating systems and programming tools effectively. HRIS managers also need strong leadership skills to guide and supervise the HRIS team, which may include database administrators and data analysts. Good communication skills are also important to these managers, because they need to write clear and concise reports and communicate effectively with vendors of information systems".
- What are the phases of system development life cycle (SDLC)?