Part VII FOCUS ON SKILLS

INTERACTIVE SKILL 7: CHAIRING MEETINGS

Part VII has been a mixture of topics having in common the single feature that they potentially affect all of the functional areas dealt with in the earlier parts of the book. For that reason our examination of an interactive skill now considers an activity that is dealing with coordination in a rather different way: making meetings work. Meetings do not constitute the whole of management but they are an inescapable part of the management process and they are frequently less successful than they should be. Leading, or chairing, meetings is a challenging skill but a rewarding aspect of human resource management. Chairing meetings is also a position that is associated with authority. Company boards, benches of magistrates, Cabinet committees, employment tribunals, political parties, debating societies are among the many activities that are led by the person in the chair. Professors in universities are appointed to chairs, not because they are too weary or lazy to stand up, but because the occupation of a chair represents authority.

WINDOW ON PRACTICE

In courts of law there is a standard opening to proceedings whereby everyone present stands for the entry of the judge or the magistrates. If there is more than one person on the bench, the chair for the central person usually has a higher back than the others to emphasise the authority of the office that this person holds.

The objectives of this Focus on skills are to:

1. Review some of the different types of meeting HR people have to chair
2. Explain the stages of running a meeting: preparation, conduct of the meeting itself, follow-up and implementation of proposals

Types of meeting

HR specialists have many meetings to chair, including selection panels, meetings with union officials, health and safety committees, job evaluation groups and many more. It is not sufficient just to know why a meeting is being held for it to be a success: the processes by which a meeting works have to be understood as well. In one of our research projects 433 meetings were observed, and many showed the chair to have such limited understanding of the basic mechanics of meetings that there was inadequate discussion, understanding and action about important matters. Poor meetings not only fail to achieve objectives, but also do harm, as members become frustrated about lack of progress or about not being able to get their point of view across. It is not just the fault of the person in charge: all participants have to learn meeting mechanics. The analogy of the orchestra is apt. The conductor is responsible for the final quality of the coordinated act, but every instrumentalist has to make a distinctive, but not individualistic, contribution that blends with all the others.

We have to pay careful attention to the details of running the meeting. Good intentions and the importance of the matter to be considered are not enough on their own. The person in charge takes the blame for things not being right. Those who feel overlooked or outmanoeuvred are merciless with those who have overlooked them, however unintentional this was by the person in the chair. The person in charge may feel very uncomfortable and may lose respect in the eyes of colleagues, but something is still usually achieved: catharsis for group members and some information exchange.

The basic necessities are a clear format, purpose and preparation, with the leader being in control. Those attending the meeting can then concentrate on content rather than fretting about the way the meeting is being conducted. People will only attend and make a success of meetings they see as useful.

WINDOW ON PRACTICE

An ICI Plant Manager has on the wall of his office a framed citation confirming that he is a full member of 'The Institution of Meetings Engineers'. This is obviously a spoof, non-existent body dreamt up by a few engineers who felt that most meetings were a waste of time. The inscription included phrases such as, 'Members shall attend all meetings called, regardless of their value . . . Any member falling asleep shall have membership suspended until he wakes up . . . A member finding a meeting useful should send a full report to the General Secretary of the Institution before seeking medical attention.'

Many readers will empathise with those comments, having attended meetings which seem pointless, or boring, or too long or all three. People who can chair meetings effectively are a rare breed, highly regarded by their colleagues.

Preparation

Making effective arrangements for a meeting help it to be an effective meeting. It is useful to run through a series of check questions.

Who should attend the meeting?

A large group will ensure that a wide range of interests is represented, so that there should be few problems of people complaining that they were excluded. Large numbers are usually appropriate when pressing matters of major importance are to be discussed and a lot of people have to be informed quickly. The problems are that the more people who attend, the more likely it is that the business will grind to a halt. Also the more people who attend, the less likely it is that there will be any useful discussion.

A small group makes discussion easier and more productive as there are fewer people competing to have their say and it is easier for the person in the chair to blend together a range of contributions in finding a consensus.

Ideally you want people either who have expertise in the matter being discussed or who have a stake in it. This ensures focus for the discussion and should help outcomes, as there is an old axiom that people will support that which they have helped to create. Observers or 'freeloaders' can be a nuisance as they do not have the discipline of having to deliver on whatever is agreed and may therefore become more concerned to make an impression as someone with bright ideas rather than thinking of practical solutions.

You may want a variety of personalities and styles to ensure a lively discussion. There is discussion of this in Chapter 13.

What is the brief or terms of reference of the meeting?

Does this meeting have the power to take a decision, or to make a recommendation, or simply to exchange information? All of these are equally valid objectives for a meeting, but it helps to be clear on this basic question of what sort of meeting it is.

Sometimes there is a limit to how wide the discussion can usefully range. Some aspects will be outside the competence of the meeting and such discussion could distract those present from dealing with the matter they should be discussing. An example is where a decision has already been made elsewhere that cannot be changed. If it has been decided elsewhere that a plant should close, there will then be a number of other meetings to decide how that decision should be implemented. It is rarely appropriate for a management meeting to try to get that decision changed. If members spend time deploring the decision that has been made, it might be worth while if they then are able to move on, having expressed their feelings.

As well as explicit terms of reference that define the range of discussion, there may well be some conclusions that would be unacceptable. The chair needs to have sufficient common sense to be aware of what these are and to whom they would not be acceptable, so that they can either be ruled out in discussion or questioned if suggested.

What should the agenda be?

There are two questions about the agenda, one more obvious than the other: what do we need to consider, and in what order?

The content of the agenda is usually drafted and proposed by the Chair or, in more formal meetings, the Chair in consultation with the Secretary. The topics for consideration need to be clearly described, so that members of the group can come to the meeting with a clear understanding of them and with a focus on the key issues. There is a risk in putting too many items on the agenda so that some are rushed, or put off to another occasion.

The sequence of items can be affected by the consideration of which chicken needs to come before which egg. Getting the right things early on the agenda can make it easier to resolve later matters provided they are in the right order; otherwise decisions are half-made and then deferred 'until we have dealt with item x'.

With meetings where there are minutes to review, matters arising and any other business, this can take up a lot of time unless there is careful planning.

ACTIVITY VII.1

Reflect on a meeting you attended recently that you felt was not well organised and run. Were the terms of reference for the meeting clear to all attending? Was the sequence of items on the agenda conducive to a successful meeting? Would the meeting have been more effective if the sequence had been different?

What about the physical location and arrangements?

How often have you attended a meeting where one or more of the following occur:

- Two people do not come because they were not told about it (or so they say).
- Three people arrive late because they could not find the room.

- Two of the late arrivals immediately leave to try to borrow chairs from another room because there are not enough.
- Coffee arrives ten minutes after the meeting has started and is served (or distributed) by catering assistants who swap comments with each other in loud voices such as, ‘One more down here, Flo’.
- Several people mutter that they had specifically asked for tea, whereupon Flo produces a docket and reads out what it says so as to clear Flo and her colleague of any responsibility for the fact that tea has not been provided.
- After half an hour a succession of people arrive for a completely different meeting, because the room has been double-booked (or so they say. Probably they forgot to book it. You’re sure that *you did* book it, aren’t you?).
- The room is noisy, too hot or too cold, the wrong shape or in the wrong place, and the toilets are miles away.

Incidents like these can wreck a meeting, or at least send the Chair into convulsions, yet most of them can be avoided with good organisation, so that you merely have to contend with the people who have brought the wrong papers or do not know what is going on as they have not opened their email since last month.

What is the meeting for?

The person leading the meeting needs a clear view of what type of meeting it is going to be. This will affect the way it is run and the way in which those attending are asked to participate.

The meeting may be *to convey information*. Then the sole focus is on the Chair, who is passing on information, or analysis or news to a gathering of those who need to know. The only role for others attending the meeting is to listen, perhaps ask questions and probably mutter explanations and reiterations to each other to check their understanding. The reason for holding a meeting for this purpose rather than distributing a memorandum is to give the opportunity for further clarification through questions; there is also the symbolic impact of information being passed on personally rather than impersonally. Meetings are therefore usually held to convey information of weight and significance.

If a meeting is *to share information* the Chair is the coordinator rather than the fount of all wisdom. A case conference is a typical example and the Chair needs skill to elicit constructive participation, encourage a free flow of information at the same time as preventing such a free flow that the meeting becomes chaotic and loses any sense of direction.

A meeting *to make a decision* will have a different style again. The expertise needed to make the right decision is distributed among the members of the group, so that much of the time is spent sharing information, but there has to be joint ownership of, or support for, the decision that is eventually made. A board meeting is the obvious example and the actual dynamics of the encounter itself will vary according to the relative status and authority of those present. The Chair may be so dominant that the meeting is to win the support of members to a decision that is already made. In other situations it is necessary for a consensus to be identified as the discussion develops so that it can be articulated for everyone to accept or modify until it wins general acceptance and commitment. Some decisions are reached by voting.

Although these are not common in management meetings, it is still essential that the Chair moves to a vote only when a consensus is apparent. A majority of one is scarcely a majority at all and talking should continue until the weight of opinion is more substantial.

Conduct of the meeting itself

How can contributions be stimulated and controlled?

For each item on the agenda, the Chair needs to consider:

- Who has something to say?
- How can I get them to say it?
- How can I keep the long-winded brief?
- When should I nudge the meeting towards a decision/the next item?

Few people are accustomed to expressing a point of view in a meeting, and most are likely to find it inhibiting. They speak best when asked to do so, and when speaking on something about which they are knowledgeable. Leaders of meetings get contributions by asking people to speak, picking up non-verbal cues of a desire to speak or reaction to what someone else has said. Statements of fact rather than expressions of opinion are the easiest way for people to make their first contribution. Experienced members of groups can help the less experienced by 'shaping' the clumsy or over-emotional comments of their colleagues and agreeing with them (for example: 'I would like to agree with what Hilary was saying and make the further point . . .' NOT, 'I think Hilary was trying to say . . .').

Inexperienced leaders of meetings sometimes show their worry about losing control by constantly emphasising the limited time available, but this makes it harder for people to make coherent contributions. People speak more effectively and come to the point more quickly when not under time pressure.

Curbing the excesses of the verbose is a true test of chairing skill. Making a succinct and focused contribution is a competence not found often among people attending meetings, so the Chair has to be skilled not only in eliciting contributions, but also in closing people down when they are running out of control. Here are some suggestions:

- Use eye contact with the speaker to indicate encouragement or discouragement. When you begin to lose interest, or become mildly irritated, the speaker will receive that silent message and respond to it.
- For those who will not respond, use more direct signals, such as looking away or looking anxiously at your watch.
- Use focus questions. The speaker will be rambling on and on, so you focus what is being said by interrupting with a question to focus the speaker and to elicit an answer that is likely to be brief. Examples are:

> 'How long will it take for X's performance to improve?'
> 'What will it cost?'
> 'Have you got it cleared?'

Bringing people in

An aspect of control is finding ways to bring people into the discussion at the time when their contribution is most appropriate. Ways to do it are like this:

- Pick out someone who you think should have a relevant or constructive comment to make and invite them: 'What is your view, Henry?' or 'I wonder if Sheila could help us with the exact figures' or, 'Well I know that Harry has direct experience of this sort of problem'.
- Pick out someone whose body language indicates a potential willingness to speak. This might be a raised hand, or an obviously angry reaction to a comment from someone else, a worried expression, a vigorous nod of agreement or a sudden change in someone's demeanour showing that they have just had a brainwave. The tricky thing is to decide who to bring into the discussion when, bearing in mind that people raising their hands or looking angry will have to have their say eventually.

Keeping it going

A meeting is best chaired when the Chair takes part constantly in the discussion, not necessarily expressing an opinion, nor declining to do so, but watching the pattern develop and helping everyone to see the pattern and concentrate on it.

- Summarise sparingly, but summarise well. It is pointless to summarise every individual contribution, as the contributors will not see that their own, crystal-clear, succinct comments need any summarising from anyone else. Summarising is needed when there are a number of contributions that have to be pulled together and a pattern found.
- An exception to the last sentence is where someone has not expressed themselves at all well, and is prepared to acknowledge it: 'I have not put that very clearly, but do you see what I am driving at?' Because you have been listening closely, you are able to move things forward by saying something like, 'Well what I got from that was . . . Have I got it right?' The person will then confirm that you got it right or will modify it. Either way they will be grateful to you. Do not say, 'I think what you were trying to say was . . .' That shows you to be patronising and the other person to be inadequate.
- Be ready to summarise where the discussion has reached, but do not summarise in search of a conclusion until you are confident that there is at least a partial consensus among all those present. Picking the right time is risky but unavoidable. If you go for a conclusion too quickly, you may not carry the meeting with you and you seriously undermine your necessary authority. Leaving it too late makes everyone fed up because things are dragging on. People grumble about meetings, but they rarely grumble about the (very few) meetings that are well run.
- Where things are really difficult, try getting a series of partial solutions. This is trying to split up an issue into parts and identifying a part where there appears to be general agreement and confirming that with the rest of the group, even if it is conditional on some other problem being resolved later. This helps the group by giving everyone a sense of some agreement and progress. Once there are two or three small matters on which there is agreement, it is surprising how much more progress can be made.

And what about your own input?

The person chairing the meeting is not simply enabling everyone else to have their say, like the Speaker of the House of Commons. There is usually a strong personal contribution to be made, often a leading contribution. People will want to hear what you have to say, maybe looking to you for a lead, but you still need to carry them with you.

There are basically two alternative approaches: playing the waiting game or leading from the front. Playing the waiting game is setting up the discussion of different points by a brief, summary introduction of the issue and eventually shaping the discussion with your own views and reaction. Leading from the front is setting out your position and then inviting suggestions. Neither is better than the other; they are simply different approaches that suit different situations and people.

Winding it up

Finally the Chair sums things up by reiterating the points upon which agreement has been reached and the nature of that agreement. There may well be further points of clarification and even argument, but the Chair has to nail down what people will accept and commit to. Equally important is to sum up the remaining points of disagreement, again with as much succinct clarity as possible. This is when you might just get your lucky break, because your summary might make someone realise that they really have been a bit petty and it is time for a magnanimous gesture. Also someone may have been doggedly hanging on to a position in the hope of movement elsewhere and is now prepared to shift because they are simply not going to win their argument. No one likes to be the reason for a group failing to agree.

ACTIVITY VII.2

On the basis of the suggestions in the last few pages formulate some forms of words that would be effective for your own personal style in various aspects of chairing a meeting, such as:

- Stimulating and controlling contributions.
- Curbing the verbose.
- Bringing people in.
- Keeping it going.
- Making your own input.

Members of the group need to disperse feeling that their time has been well spent and that they had their day, knowing what has been agreed and what is outstanding, and knowing what happens next.

Follow-up

When the meeting has finished, the leader of the meeting still has work to do.

Minutes or report of the meeting

Formal meetings have minutes. Less formal meetings have notes. Informal meetings may not have any agreed record at all, but people will still have made jottings in their diary, on a clipboard or in the margin of the agenda. You have no control over what notes people at the meeting make for their own use, but the way you run the meeting will, of course, affect what they write.

The more formal minutes or notes will be written by the Secretary, if there is one, or by the Chair. The purpose is to produce a stimulus to appropriate action, not to write historical analysis. Sometimes it is important to describe the discussion and issues, so that those not in attendance can understand not simply what was agreed but at least some of the reasoning. In other cases it is sufficient simply to list the action points and who is responsible for following them through.

Activity VII.3 has the framework of an administrative drill for a committee secretary to follow. To make this illustration concrete we are assuming a meeting once a month on Day 28.

ACTIVITY VII.3

Day	**Phase One: MINUTES AND PRELIMINARIES**
1, 2	Write draft of minutes for yesterday's meeting, including notes of action items.
5	Clear minutes with Chair and confirm date and time of next meeting.
6, 7	Type, copy and distribute minutes.
10	Book room for next meeting.
	Phase Two: AGENDA
18	Ask committee members for items to be included on next agenda.
21	Discuss order of agenda and inclusion/deferment of items with Chair. Suggested sequence:
(a)	Announcements (apologies, introduction of new members, Chair's points).
(b)	Minutes of previous meeting and matters arising, where matter involves brief report. Matters arising for further discussion to be separate agenda items.
(c)	Items requiring decision but involving little controversy.
(d)	Most difficult item.
	(possible break)
(e)	Next most difficult item.
(f)	Items requiring discussion but not decision.
(g)	Easy items.
(h)	Any other business.
(i)	Provisional date of next meeting.
	Phase Three: RUN-UP
22	Circulate agenda and other papers to members, with note of date, time and venue.
26	Check seating, catering, visual aids.
	Collate all papers, past minutes, apologies.
28	Attend meeting and take notes for minutes.

Implementation of proposals

The meeting will have ended with general understanding that various actions would follow. Some of these will follow at once, as people scurry away to make their phone calls or look up information. Other actions will be forgotten unless there is a reminder. This is where the circulation of the minutes can be useful. Other actions will probably need the Chair to push them along and pull together actions by different people as the situation changes in the days after the meeting.

SUMMARY PROPOSITIONS

VII.1 Chairing meetings is an aspect of management that is crucial to making and implementing management decisions.

VII.2 Key aspects of preparing for a meeting are: who should attend, what is the brief, what is the agenda, what about physical location and arrangements, what is the meeting for: to convey information, to share information or to make a decision?

VII.3 Key features of conducting the meeting itself are: how contributions can be stimulated and controlled, bringing people in, keeping it going, making your own input and winding it up.

VII.4 An administrative drill for a meeting secretary deals with minutes and preliminaries, agenda and run-up.

GENERAL DISCUSSION TOPICS

1 What advantages and drawbacks do you see in an arrangement where everyone takes it in turn to chair a meeting of a particular group?

2 Why do so many people complain about the amount of time they spend in meetings?

3 To what extent could video conferencing or a web-based chat room be an alternative to a conventional meeting?

FURTHER READING

Hutton, W. and Giddens, A. (2000) *On the Edge: Living with Global Capitalism*. London: Jonathan Cape
Combines journalistic incisiveness with distinguished scholarship. An interesting European contrast to the American Stiglitz (*see* below).

Nugent, H. (2004) 'Pensioners forced back to work', *The Times*, 5 February

Stiglitz, J.E. (2002) *Globalisation and its Discontents*. New York: Norton
Provides a clear analysis of the problems facing current patterns of globalisation in business.

Taylor, R. (2003) 'Generation Next', *People Management*, Vol. 9, No. 18
A quick summary of the Future of Work programme is a helpful starter to looking on the website below.

WEB LINKS

The Future of Work programme of research has a great and varied output. Details are at www.leeds.ac.uk/esrcfutureofwork
The International Labour Organisation is at www.ilo.org

Another international body is the World Federation of Personnel Management Associations at **www.wfpma.com**

A selection of national bodies is:
Australian Human Resources Institute at **www.ahri.com.au**
British Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development at **www.cipd.co.uk**
Hong Kong Institute of Human Resource Management at **www.hkihrm.org**
Japanese Society for Human Resource Management at **www.jshrm.org**
United States Society for Human Resource Management at **www.shrm.org**

REFERENCES

ILO (1944) *Income Security Regulations*. Geneva: International Labour Office.
Economic and Social Research Council, *The Future of Work*. Details are at: www.leeds.ac.uk/esrcfutureofwork.

REVIEW OF PART VII

This final part of the book has covered some diverse topics, having in common the fact that they cannot be pigeon-holed in a specific area of HR practice like those of Parts II–VI. They are also issues that have come to the fore of consideration more recently than the main areas of HR work, where practice is long established, no matter how often it has to be modified and brought up to date. Another common feature is that they cannot be parcelled up and 'passed to Personnel'. They are aspects of management that have an HR dimension and indicate the fact that HRM is increasingly a part of all management that cannot be just dumped somewhere, although the need for specialised, expert input will grow and some administrative aspects should sensibly be collected together.

As with everything else we have looked at, there are important social and political aspects to the first three chapters on the international dimension, ethics and work-life balance, while the measurement of HR effectiveness almost implies questioning the value of everything that has gone before in this book, and chairing meetings is a skill that all managers need.

Where do we go to from here? Futurology is a flawed science, but there are some questions with which to close.

How will international HRM develop?

We have made several references to globalisation, but the extent to which this will be the future framework for international HRM is not clear. The social and political implications of globalisation are such that there is a strong, worldwide resistance to it. If finance ministers of major economies meet, they will have to endure excessive security and massive public demonstrations from people seeking to prevent the destabilising effect of the way in which financial markets work and the inequalities of income between the richer countries and developing countries. This is often accompanied by objections to capitalism and to the proliferation of Western values.

Within the European Union there is an attempt to control the more destructive effects of international financial markets, so this could lead to some stability within the Eurozone and beyond, but it depends on political aspirations of member states being curbed in the interest of the greater good. This may be too much to ask. As the EU enlarges, there are matters with a direct bearing on HR in the freer movement of labour around the zone, but the stronger economies face a paradox in needing immigration, but not all immigrants. The relatively low birth rate in Western Europe, with a corresponding increase in the number of older citizens, produces a demand for immigrants with useful practical skills. At the same time there is a reluctance bordering on paranoia to avoid immigration by people 'who will be a burden on the state'. So there is the paradox: those needing asylum become increasingly unwelcome, while those with useful skills should probably be encouraged to remain in their home countries to develop those struggling economies.

How will the ethical questions for HRM evolve?

Many ethical questions in HRM for the future are closely associated with the international dimension. What are the implications for Western capitalism of the rise of confidence and assertiveness in Islam? This is not simply a question for politicians; it is a challenge to HR managers in how they respond to issues such as the provision of prayer facilities and time off for religious festivals. It is a matter of how well prepared employees are to go and work in countries where the Western ethic is not dominant, and how well incipient racism is handled at home as well as abroad. The ESRC research programme on the Future of Work, referred to earlier in this book, raises a number of such issues. Satisfaction with work decreased during the 1990s, despite generally higher living standards and average job tenure being longer that it was in the previous decade. This is popularly attributed to longer hours and increased stress, although that seems an overly simplistic explanation. HR people always want to make the most of the input from the resourceful humans they employ and an important prerequisite is that those employed should be satisfied with their part of the bargain in the employment contract. The law may be able to deliver on specific human rights that are a compensation for having to work, such as pay, hours, holidays and union representation, but the law does not work well in delivering job satisfaction. In the opening chapter we offered a philosophy for human resource management that included:

> Only by satisfying the needs of the individual contributor will the business obtain the commitment to organisational objectives that is needed for organisational success, and only by contributing to organisational success will individuals be able to satisfy their personal employment needs. It is when employer and employee – or business and supplier of skills – accept this mutuality and reciprocal dependence that human resource management is exciting, centre stage and productive of business success.

That is tough to ask of any HR person, yet nothing less will do. The Future of Work programme also concluded that most workplaces do not pursue HR management techniques. By now readers will appreciate that HRM is much, much more than *techniques*. The continuing ethical question is, as it has been for over a century, how to achieve efficiency with justice and how to combine performance with satisfaction.

How will the work-life balance change?

Work-life balance is an ethical question as well as an efficiency issue. This, of course, is a combination that extends to most HR work, but the Future of Work programme tells us that family-friendly policies are few and rarely amount to more than the legal minimum, despite the clear advantages found in businesses that adopt them with enthusiasm and commitment to their success.

A slightly different aspect of work-life balance is in the length of working life. Although there was a general tendency through the last half of the twentieth century for people to retire earlier, this has eased in the last decade as the associated costs have become so substantial. The gradual raising of the official retirement age for women in the UK symbolised this change. The point at which people end their working life is obviously closely linked with the level of pensions and the standard of living they will then enjoy, as the expectations of retirement have risen sharply. In 1944 the International Labour Office defined the age of retirement simply as:

> The prescribed age should be that at which persons commonly become incapable of efficient work, the incidence of sickness and invalidity becomes heavy, and unemployment, if present, is likely to be permanent. (ILO 1944)

Sixty years later none of us is satisfied with that picture of retirement being a time of living in the shadows, incapable, unwell and probably not wanted. Our expectations have risen, with ideas of early retirement from choice, 'while you're still young enough to enjoy it', and an expectation that retirement should not necessarily be a time for penny-pinching, but a time to reap the rewards from one's work and to do things that there was never time for before. It is now seen more as a beginning than an end, and consequently the pensions that support this new beginning are seen as more important at an earlier age than before. Helen Nugent (2004), reporting on research carried out for a major bank, claims that nearly 3 million pensioners in the UK are returning to work because they cannot afford to live on their retirement pension, although very few work more than a modest number of hours a week. Other commentators argue that it is unfair that people should be obliged to relinquish full-time work simply because they have reached an arbitrary age. For whatever reason, the balance between years spent working and later years spent not working is likely to be an interesting HR issue in the future.

These are just three of the daunting challenges and exciting prospects ahead of HRM and, as we saw in the last chapter, HR will have to deliver and the effectiveness of its delivery will have to be measurable. It is a twin challenge: to meet reasonable 'bottom line' expectations of contribution to the financial viability of the business, whether public, private or voluntary, and to meet the human expectations of those who work in the business and those outside the business who expect it to provide employment, social responsibility and economic growth. In the twenty-first century membership of CIPD, the British professional body, stands at a record 120,000 and growing. If HR does not deliver, that number will stop growing.

Part VII CASE STUDY PROBLEM

Morris and Young

Morris and Young Associates is a training and development consultancy that started trading in 2004. It is based in a town in Shropshire and works with organisations across the West Midlands of the UK. With thirty years' experience between them of both training and the care field, Felix Morris and Bill Young undertake assignments for all manner of organisations, but their special strengths are, first, a detailed knowledge and experience of social care and, second, an expertise in electronic assessment for NVQs.

NVQs were introduced in Chapter 17, where the comment was made that they have not been universally popular in the early years since their introduction. Care is an area where the take-up has been appreciably higher than the national average, partly because of the large number of people working in the field who have not previously had the opportunity to gain qualification.

Morris and Young provide training in a number of areas that will be familiar to all readers of this book, such as leadership and motivation, interviewing, recruitment and selection, performance management and supervisory skills. They are also very busy with internal verification, which is an integral part of NVQ training and uses some of the methods of measuring HR effectiveness that were set out in Chapter 33. Some aspects of their technical expertise in the care field, such as life story work and handling aggressive behaviour, might have applications elsewhere. Samples of their material on personal development are included on the website for this book. It is based on the method of transactional analysis (*see* Stewart and Jaines 1987) developed by Eric Berne (1966), which has been used rather differently in management development programmes for many years.

Required

1. In what circumstances might you use a new consultancy like this rather than approach a well-established national or international business?
2. How would you relate their expertise to the needs of your business and what further information would you need before approaching them?
3. In what areas (if any) do you think Morris and Young should develop their offerings to be of value outside the caring professions?
4. What is the place of consultants in the future of HRM?

References

Berne, E. (1966) *Games People Play*. Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin.

Stewart, I. and Jaines, V. (1987) *TA Today: A New Introduction to Transactional Analysis*. New York: Life Space Publishing.

www.morrisyoung.net (website of Morris and Young).

Part VII EXAMINATION QUESTIONS

1 In what ways does the expansion of the European Union in 2004 affect human resource management in a member state? Identify a particular member state in which to base your answer.

2 What are the practical implications of 'think globally: act locally'?

3 To what extent can HR managers act ethically within the culture of an organisation that does not always encourage the ethical standards that the HR manager holds?

4 A notice on the staff noticeboard in a British company reads as follows:

   'Service engineers always put customer needs first. If this sometimes involves parking in a restricted area, the company will reimburse the engineer the full cost of any fine that is imposed.'

   What is your view of this explicit invitation to break the law?

5 Family-friendly policies to ensure work-life balance could be seen as unfair as they provide more benefits for those with children than for those without. Do you agree?

6 To what extent can the effectiveness of the HR function be measured by quantitative methods?

7 'Human resource management is an integral part of the work of everyone in a managerial post, so having a separate HR function meddles and dilutes responsibility.' How would you counter that point of view?

8 'Human resource management is the essential lubricant of the organisational machine and can therefore only be judged on its long-term effectiveness.' To what extent do you agree with this view?