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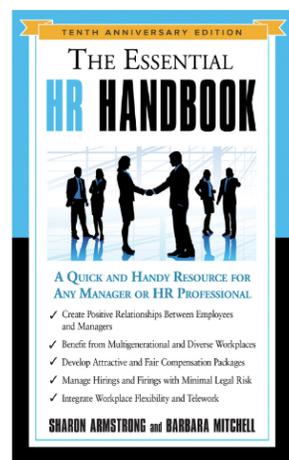
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The Essential HR Handbook

—*Sharon Scott Armstrong & Barbara Mitchell*
10th Anniversary Edition

Executive Book Summary



Overview

This book is meant to provide empirical guides for Human Resources Management practices. It serves as an invaluable resource and covers a variety of topics such as recruiting the right talents, providing professional development to employees, engaging employees with the right incentives and compensation mechanisms and managing a diverse workplace.

The two authors use their many years of extensive management experience to provide valuable insights on many issues. Many of the problems encountered in human resource management are answered in this book. It gives step by step advices on various phenomena. It also provides a series of documents, questionnaires and tools for managers to use.

About the Authors

Sharon Scott Armstrong

Sharon graduated from George Washington University with a master's degree in counseling. She established Sharon Armstrong and Associates in 1998, where she has provided training, consulting to many large corporations and small businesses as well as government. Now she operates a talent brokering company and serves as a member of the national Society for Human Resource Management.



“Today, more than ever, leaders of successful organization understand the importance of good human resources principles for maintaining a healthy business.”

(p, 13)



Barbara Mitchell

Barbara has taken graduate-level business courses at UCLA, the University of Denver, and Loyola University. Before starting her own business, she was in senior leadership positions with Marriott International. Now she works as an author, speaker, and the Managing Partner of the Mitchell Group. She consults with a wide variety of clients on issues involving people, helping them successfully hire, develop, engage, and retain the best talent available.

Strategic Planning

Importance of Strategic Planning

With effective planning, a company will be able to better allocate its resources. The plans a company makes can determine the direction it will take in the future.

Three steps to strategic planning:

1. Set up organization mission.
2. Identify short- term goals of the organization
3. Decide what action to take and what to be done differently- to reach the objectives.



Quality organizational strategies provide everyone in the organization with a sense of where the organization is moving forward. The first step to getting close to this goal is to craft a mission statement and share it with anyone related to it. Here are the elements for a mission statement:

- “Desired image in the marketplace.
- Target market for products or services.
- Products or services (described).
- Local, national, or global reach—where your clients are located.” (p,16)

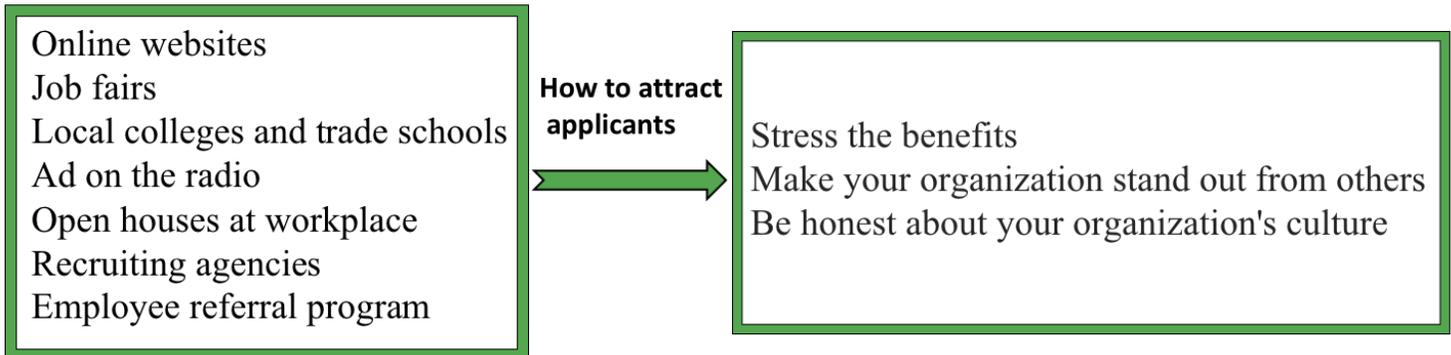
Once the mission statement is established, managers can start implementing the plan, where you create a timeline of when to achieve the goal, schedule milestone reviews to keep an eye on the progress and communicate the plan with employees. It could be in the form of writing, email or face to face communication at meetings.

NOTE: Organizations need to define how the HR department functions in a strategic plan, as human resources are the primary productive forces, and it influences almost every organizational activity.

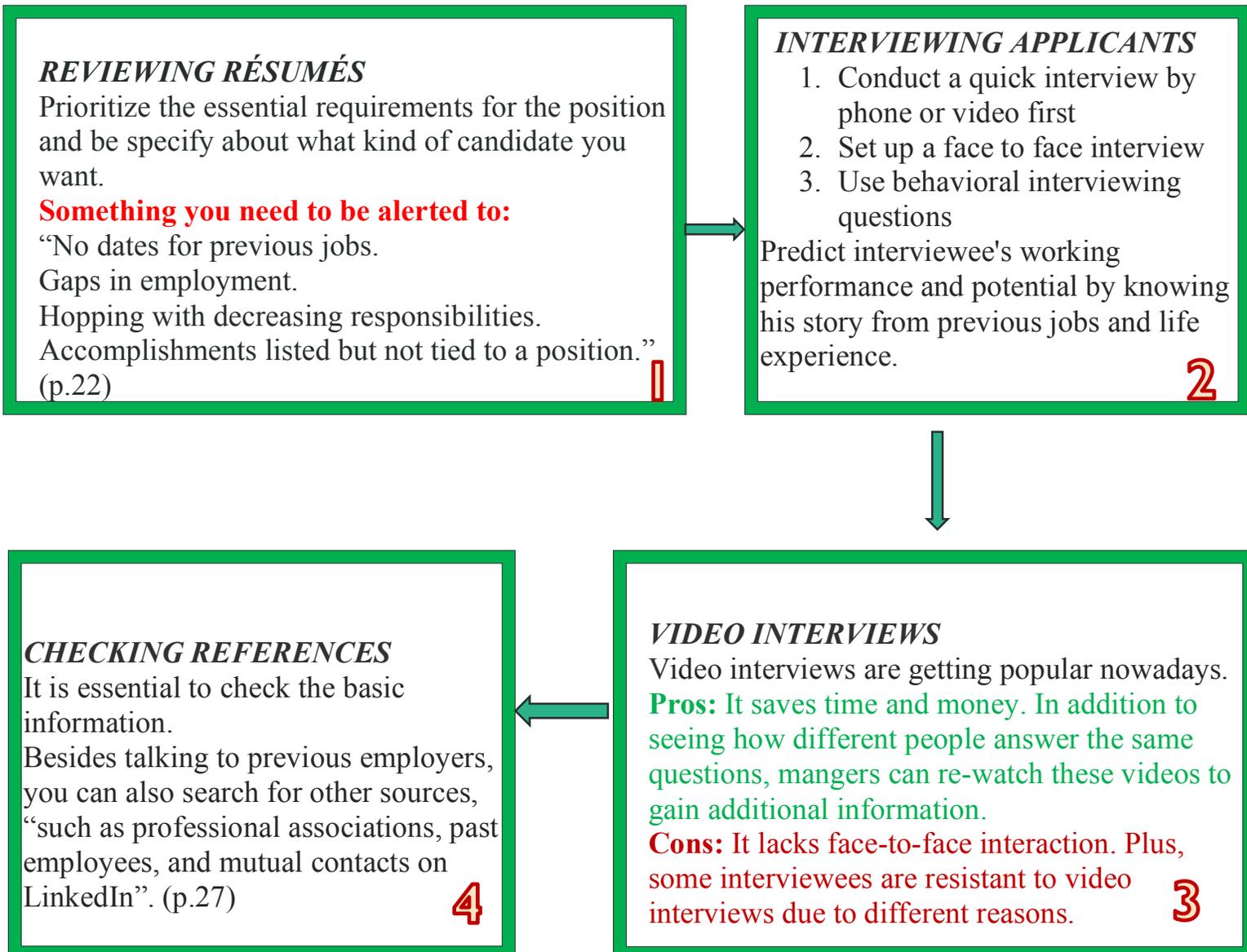
“For HR professionals... they must learn as much as possible about the operation of their organization's business. Studying business plans, strategic plans, annual reports, and other written documents is one of the best ways to do this; so is networking with others in the organization” (p, 12).

Talent Acquisition

Ways to find applicants:



Hiring Steps:





Orientation Major Goals

1. Help new employees understand why they got hired
2. Help new employees understand your organization and the culture
3. Keep employees up to date on their role and place in the organization

Onboarding

Onboarding is the process of familiarizing and integrating new employees into the organization. A good onboarding program helps retain employees and prevent them from going to your competitor company. Exposing employees to the company's history, traditions, daily routine, and culture allows them to integrate and adapt to the team faster. It will reduce anxiety, and increase productivity more quickly.



Onboarding vs Orientation

- ✚ An orientation program is the beginning of the onboarding. It is important to leave a good first impression on employees and make them feel welcome.
- ✚ Typically, orientation only last one or two day. Onboarding is an ongoing process. During this process, organizations need to involve everyone in the company. It is not just a short term period run by HR staff.

Note: Use the **Employee Handbook** as a helpful tool to provide basic information and assign each new employee a **buddy** to help them adapt quicker.

Talent Development

Professional training can improve employees' working capacity, work quality, and help the organization function more effectively. Meanwhile, it can also meet the needs of employees to achieve their self-value.

Before providing professional training for employees, leaders need to understand that adults learn differently from children and familiarize themselves with adult learning theory to better design the training.



Three Training Models

Coaching

The coach will assess the trainees' training needs and develop a plan to work with the employees' to achieve the goal.

Mentoring

It is a relationship between two individuals that share profession knowledge and experience.

IPDP

Individual Personal Development Plan is "usually a written plan for developing specific knowledge, skills, and competencies that will be valuable". (P,38)

Four levels of evaluation for training:

1. Measure participants' reaction in the training

2. Use informal test or assessment to measure the learning.

3. Measure the changing in employees' behaviors.

4. Measure the changes of productivity and results.

Benefit and Compensation

Benefit

Nowadays, the benefits that organizations provide to their employees account for many of their payroll expenses. In addition to giving the welfare and salary required by law, some companies may voluntarily choose to offer additional benefit packages for their employees because good benefits motivate employees to work harder. Before drafting the benefits package planning, it is essential to check with the local employment law.



Compensation

Compensation can happen in different ways, such as wage scales and forms of reward for work performance. Organizations need to establish a fair and reasonable compensation plan, which “are usually set by top management with input from senior staff and the Finance and Human Resources departments” (p.45).

To achieve this goal, managers can use salary-survey data, reference the experience from existing positions, and communicate with employees.

Employees Relations

“Employee relations refers to the ongoing process of maintaining a productive, equitable, and smoothly functioning workplace—a place where employees do their jobs well, get along with each other, and can depend on the organization to help solve disputes impartially” (p.56).



***Remember:** The more prepared you are, the better you'll be able to handle those situations when actual difficulties arise!*

When problem arises:

1. Set up Performance improvement plans
2. Use coaching and counseling to provide supports for them.
3. If the situation did not change, you need to have Disciplinary discussions, which sometimes might lead to termination of the employment.

NOTE: Respect your employees and keep records for the conversations

There are lots of challenges in employee relations.

Managers need to try their best to pinpoint and predict these issues

Use Employee Handbook to illustrate the policy and consequence clearly.

Establish a fair, consistency plan and communicate with employees in time.



Managing a Diverse Workforce

In the past, the focus on diversity in the workforce was mainly on gender and ethnicity. With increasing awareness, diversity now includes visible and invisible differences, such as communication style, experience, etc. When a company recruits and retains diverse talents, it increases productivity, thereby increasing profits. In addition to increasing workforce diversity, **inclusion** is critically important.

Ways to Establish a diverse and inclusive culture:

Try to gain support from the top of the organization.

Review the organization's current policies, procedures, and practices

Review the organization's website

Review the information available for employees

Use representative employee photos and stories on the website that are natural and authentic.

Review the strategic plan and the HR plan to be sure they support diversity and inclusion.



“Make the necessary changes and announce to employees. Be sure the diversity-related material is true, useful, and meaningful.

Be sure the information states the commitment to diversity and inclusion. Include men and women of various races, ethnicities, and generations, and people with a visible disability or other aspects of difference.”

p.75

“Diversity is being invited to the party. Inclusion is being asked to dance!” p.78

Technology



Technology in 21st century:

Online websites and social media to post job positions
 Prescreening soft wares that scan for key words to eliminate unqualified applicants
 Online conferencing tools to set up a virtual interview
 Big data to help make a better decision
 The paperless HR office
 Telecommuting and the remote working
 Self-service human resources
 Mobile and wearable technology for real-time performance review
 Online training and education

NOTE: The use of new technologies in the workplace requires new policies accordingly. The Employee Handbook should be updated to ensure that all of these new technologies are being used properly. Employees should be reminded that any violations will result in disciplinary action, up to termination.

Three most important principles when implementing employee policies:

Consistency Fairness Non-discrimination

Today's Workplace Challenges

Organizations are changing all the time as the world continues to evolve and progress. How these changes and challenges are handled will determine the development and prosperity of the organization.



How to be Prepare for the Challenges

“To take their organizations forward to the future, managers should:

- Develop a code of ethics and monitor compliance with it.
- Create a positive organizational culture.
- Work to maximize employee engagement.
- Maximize the positive aspects to minimize the differences among generations in the workforce.
- Create opportunities for employees to have work/life balance and flexibility.
- Allow for telecommuting and other flexible work options.
- Carefully evaluate whether outsourcing will benefit the organization.
- Provide training on cross-cultural issues for both managers and employees.
- Carefully monitor issues relating to the opioid crisis and its impact on employees.
- Update policies and practices regarding medical marijuana and adult-use marijuana and get up-to-date guidance from a labor attorney.
- Make decisions based on data.
- Partner with IT on data security for your organization and be proactive!”



Critical Evaluation

This book provides the readers with practical and useful human resource management techniques on a wide range of topics, from strategic planning to managing staff and meeting the workplace's challenges. The advice given in each chapter is in great details, with every step of the process clearly and well explained. In many chapters, the authors emphasize that when a company wants to build a mature Human Recourses system, it is essential to revise and set up company policies fairly and consistently. More importantly, communication between employees and managers should be timely and transparent. These three factors can have a strong influence on the effective operation of a business.

This book is a good read for newcomers to HR management and those interested in the industry. However, the book lacks a theoretical analysis of the reasons for various phenomena and the solutions given. A wide range of topics is discussed but not in great depth. Some of the discussions are basic. It does not go into the underlying reasons behind it. Additionally, some of the advice given is based on practical experience. This book would have been more substantial if the authors had added strong theories and analyses to support their arguments.

Discussion Questions:

- 1. Out of all the topics mentioned in this summary, which one do you think is the most challenging for HR management, why?**
- 2. If you are a manager for an organization, what practical advice in the book will be helpful for your management work and which one would you actually use? Why?**

Reference: Armstrong, S., & Mitchell, B. (2008). *The essential HR handbook: A quick and handy resource for any manager or HR professional. 10th Anniversary Edition*. Franklin Lakes, N.J: Career Press.