

ABSTRACT

EXPERT HUMAN RESOURCES DECISION MAKERS: UNCOVERED IN CONTEXT

By Jeffrey Cole Benny Dell

This thesis investigates how human resources (HR) experts make decisions within the context of their organization. It uses the Naturalistic Decision Making model (NDM) to best determine the processes deployed by 20 HR experts. The HRM Practices Model (Subramony & Feinauer, working paper) is supported and extended by the qualitative data collected in this study. Two major stages are added to the implementation process: execution and process embedment. Additionally, the implications for the education system and preparation for the next generation are discussed.

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by

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INTRODUCTION

A Qualitative Investigation of Human Resource Management Practices

There is a large body of literature linking human resource management (HRM) practices with various indicators of firm performance including productivity, retention, growth and market returns (Combs, 2006; Subramony, working paper). Presently there is also an interest emerging in how these practices are diffused through organizational networks (Carson, Lanier, Carson, & Guidry, 2000; Rynes, Colbert & Brown, 2002), and adopted or rejected by firms (Rynes, Giluk & Brown, 2007; Rynes et al., 2002; Terpstra & Rozell, 1997; Johns, 1993). Given the costs involved in adopting new HRM practices, and the potential benefits derived from adopting appropriate practices (Huselid, 1995; Becker & Gerhart 1996; Liouville & Bayad, 1998), it seems useful to consider the *process* of HRM adoption within organizations.

The aim of this thesis is to review various models of the HRM adoption process, and present the findings from a qualitative study aimed at uncovering a key aspect of this process: the role of the HR manager. While there are definite benefits to studying the forces driving the diffusion of various HRM practices between firms (Abrahamson, 1996, 1999) or across the scientist-practitioner divide (Rynes et al., 2007), this thesis will focus upon the adoption process as implemented within organizations by a critical organizational actor – the HR manager responsible for adopting and implementing the practice. In this study I propose to follow a methodology based on the naturalistic decision making (NDM) framework (Lipshitz, Klein, Orasanu, & Salas, 2001), and to ask

the question, “What is the process by which HR managers adopt and implement various types of HRM processes within their firms?”

This thesis will discuss three existing models which attempt to explain decision making processes in organizations -- more specifically, decisions in the HR function -- and then will introduce a model more appropriate for HR decisions. The Rational Decision Making Model, the Cell Decision Making Model, and the Idea Selling Model are ultimately flawed when applied to the HR function for various reasons. One of the primary flaws within each of these three models is their disregard for contextual contingencies. The rigidity of these models leaves them vulnerable to backfiring. Finally, the HRM Practices Model is introduced as a dynamic model which accounts for context and contingencies.

Rational Decision Making

The rational decision making model suggests that change agents will propose innovations or implementations in order to make the organization more efficient (Birkinshaw, Hamel, & Mol, 2008). This model (Figure 1) suggests that internal (e.g. HR) and external (e.g. consultant) change agents interplay with each other over four set stages of innovation. This thesis will focus on the role of the internal change agent. The main stages of innovation in the rational decision making model are motivation, invention, implementation and lastly, theorization and labeling.

Within these four main stages of innovation, there are four steps which an internal change agent follows, each connected via a transition period between the primary stages. The first step which an internal change agent undertakes is that of identifying the novel problem. This acts as the motivating force to begin the implementation process. Following the transition period of problem driven research, the internal change agent begins to experiment by developing hypothetical new practices to alleviate the organizational problem. In this stage, the internal change agent is considered to be in the optimal position to determine the best solution for the organization. Following the internal change agent's development of new practices, there follows a transition period of trial and error. The trial and error phase is where hypothetical new practices are put to the test in live-fire implementations; the practice that survives is crowned king. Finally this leads the internal change agent to reflect on his or her experimentation and legitimize it to his or her superiors and external critics.

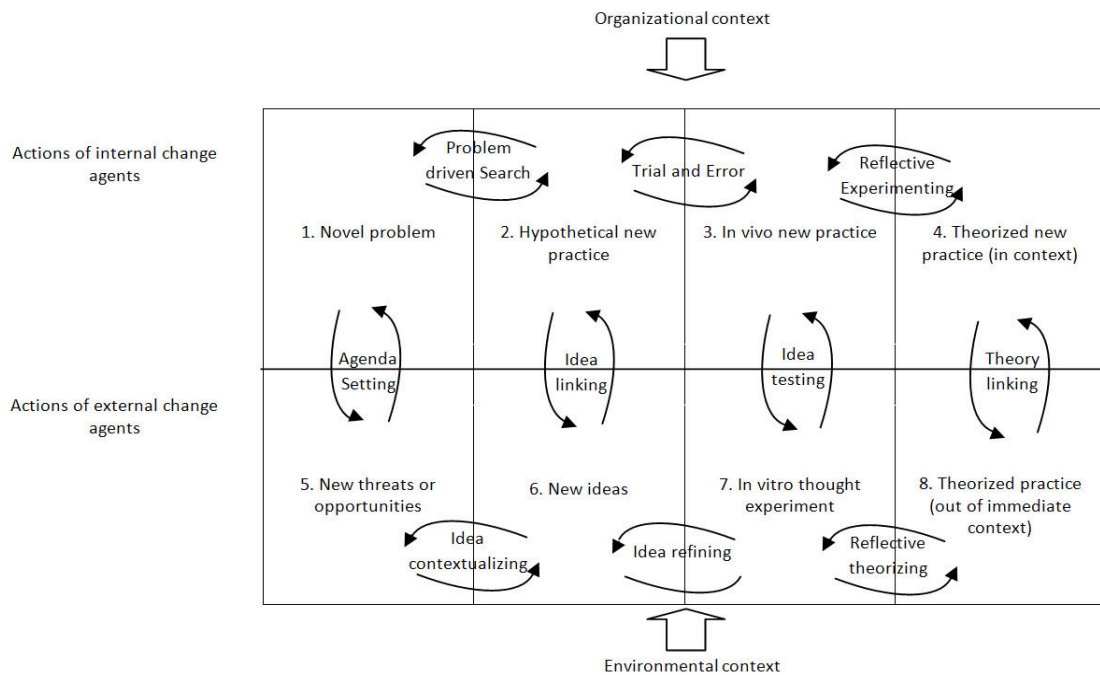


Figure 1. Rational Decision Making Model.

The primary focus of the rational decision making model, as shown, is the trial and error transition between invention and implementation. From an organizational perspective, trial and error implementation can cost both resources and the reputation of the change agent (Wright, 1974). The theoretical foundation of this model assumes rationality, or that all steps within the innovation and implementation are done in a calculated manner. This does not account for standard human irrationality or for contextual influences on the decision maker. It is unrealistic to assume a manager of any level of an organization has the resources (e.g. budget, time, manpower) to calculate every move with rational precision. The theory of bounded (or limited) rationality suggests that managers within organizations, or any change agents for that matter, do not have the luxury of complete rationality. Organizational decisions are constrained by a

lack of information, and are often made without consultation of all available information, or fully comprehended data (March, 1994; Kahneman, 2003).

Another chink in the armor of the rational decision making system is its focus on rationality. Solutions to problems may not be rational, and may include many fool hardy risks that put the company in jeopardy for a brief amount of time in order to yield significantly improved results. Options such as this will not be viewed as rational, and therefore will not be considered as serious contenders (Weirich, 2004).

Cell Decision Making

Cell Decision Making, or micro-processes, is described as capitalizing on small victories in isolated pockets of the organization (Figure 2). This is not a decision making model, but a process model, which suggests that repetition of micro-level achievements will ultimately shape the macro, or organizational, level (Reay, Golden-Biddle, & GermAnn, 2006). Employees move this process by creating isolated examples of “new” ways to work, then fitting the new ways into the current organizational practices, thereby proving the worth of the new ways of working. This process leads to the legitimization of the new practices in the isolated environment. This process is repeated until several circumstances of the new practice are put into effect and ultimately together become a legitimate organizational practice. These cellular changes are often made by embedded employees who identify opportunities through their experiences on the front line. Reay et al. 2006 suggest that these can often be done “under the radar,” where a more visible

initiative may have less chance of success. These discrete cellular change efforts ultimately manifest into a large scale organizational change, beginning from the bottom of the organizational hierarchy and scaling upwards. This spread through the organization is achieved by the repetition of small victories, which are then advertised and promoted to the next organizational work group, or leadership.

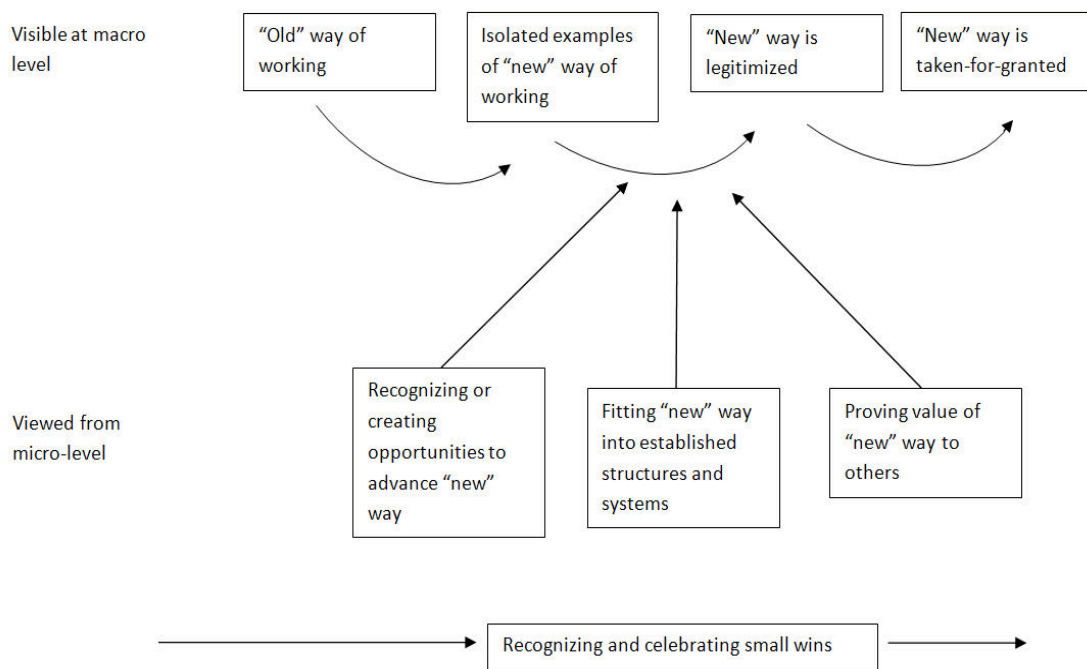


Figure 2. Cell Decision Making Model.

The cellular level of organizational change is largely focused on single situations, with lower level employees championing change. Ultimately this model is not geared toward making decisions, but specifically deals with the bottom-up approach of implementation. This is a viable model for small scale maintenance within the organization, where there may be limited repercussions of cellular change efforts. Reay

suggested that the cellular, or micro, victories will inevitably result in organizational, or macro level results.

An organization's employees may not be the best choice of change agents on a global scale due to conflicting interests and organizational experience. This implementation model ignores the need for competent experts, who are educated through schooling and relevant experiences to consider the situation globally. The organizational repercussions must be considered by such an expert before revolution occurs within the lower tiers of the organization. This myopic approach does not take into consideration other organizational units (e.g. work groups, departments), or the forecasts that would accompany project management, but only focuses on changing the current circumstances.

Idea Selling Decision Model

The idea selling model of decision making assumes the perspective of a salesperson pitching a product or service. Here, an organizational change agent, regardless of position, must "sell" the proposed decision to upper management (Dutton & Ashford, 1993). The model of this process (Figure 3) begins with consideration of the personality and mood characteristics of top management, which translate into the likelihood of a successful sales pitch. The primary focus of this model is that of issue packaging, or the framing process. Here the seller presents the decision to be made in an acceptable format considering the content he or she presents, the presentation style, and who the issue appeals to. At the same time the seller must consider who to involve in the

decision, what channel to voice the selling process through, and whether to take a formal or informal approach to the sales pitch. The process culminates into the attention that top management gives to the sales pitch, which indicates the likelihood that action will be taken in with regard to the issue.

This model relies on the perception that top management is uninvolved in the daily organizational processes, and that they are to be won over, rather than collaborated with. Additionally, the model by definition is concerned with the framing of an implementation presentation. It focuses on the sale of the implementation, rather than the organizational need or value of it. The process of selling and adjusting the perspective of how the sale is made does not include the value that might be added by including organizational leaders. The prospect of losing credibility suggests that sellers may not take up issues which are considered to be risky or to have a stigma associated with them, despite the organizational importance of the issue. Because of the allowance of spin in this model, the solution may not always match the problem, as the best sold solution will be adopted by the upper management, not necessarily the best planned solution. In this case, the upper management themselves should be the ones identifying the issue, and use their immense collective of experience to identify a desired solution type.

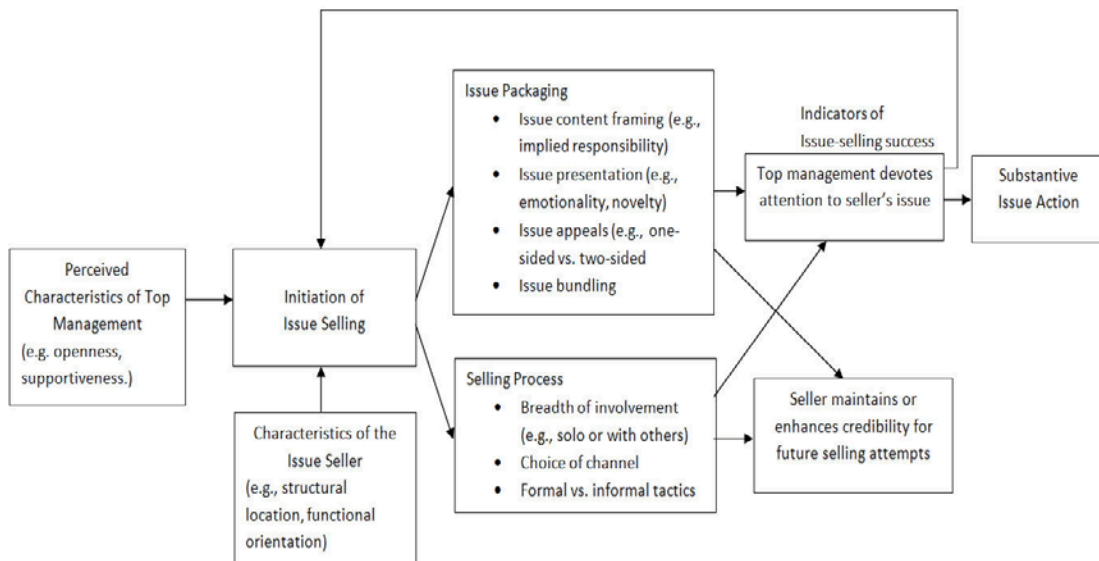


Figure 3. Issue Selling Model.

HRM Practices Model

The model which drives this thesis (Figure 4) is a precise amalgamation of grounded theory, bounded rationality, and issue selling. Using grounded theory to shape their model, Subramony & Feinauer (working paper) studied the experiences of 20 HR experts to determine their processes of decision making. This approach gives the HRM Practices Model the unique perspective of observing the phenomenon of HRM decisions from the standpoint of the internal change agent, or HR expert, making it truly pertinent to real-world organizations (Locke, 2001). Such a model of HR decision making would greatly appeal to Goldilocks as it is neither overly precise (cell decision model), nor overly broad (rational decision model); it is just right for its application in HRM. This

model incorporates the issue selling model, not so much as the beginning of the decision process as noted by Dutton & Ashford (1993) but instead as a single step prior to implementation of the decision. Rather than pure rationalism, this model utilizes bounded rationality, taking into account that the decision maker is constrained by the environment and will often not fully observe all solutions in complete detail (March 1994; Kahneman, 2003). Ultimately, the context in which the decision maker finds himself or herself will determine how quickly he or she moves through this model, as well as what resources from each stage are utilized.

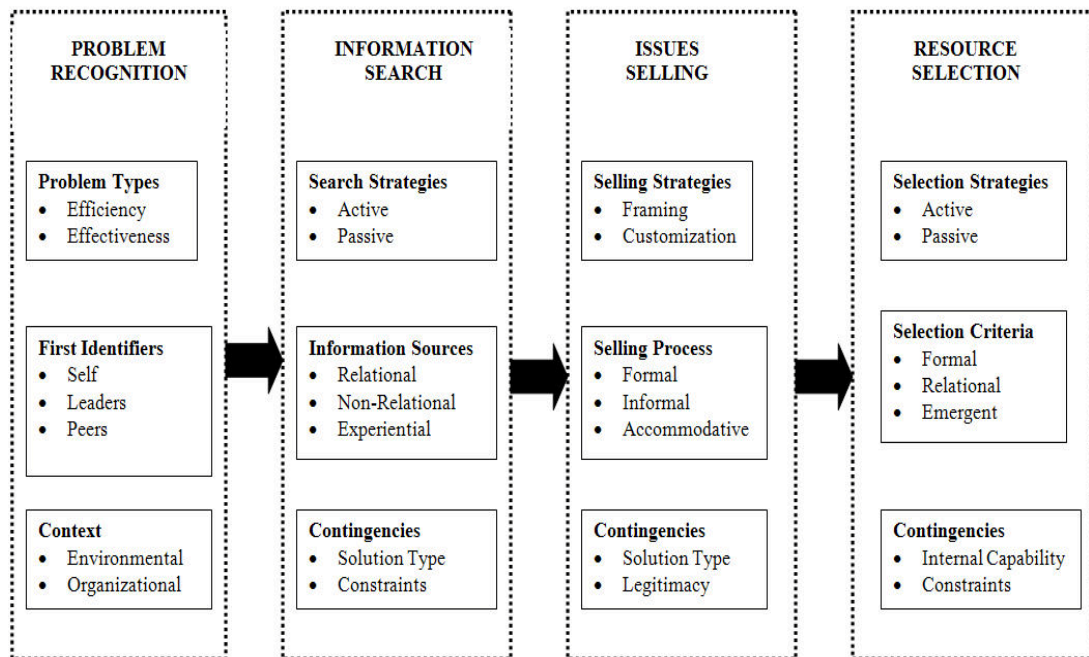


Figure 4. HRM Practices Model

Naturalistic Decision Making

The NDM model is a descriptive paradigm of how experienced decision makers process information in *real-world* context (Lipshitz et al., 2001). Decision makers do not find themselves in a vacuum when they are making decisions. Environmental influences create a unique context for each decision which is made, something which static models based on the individual or a desired outcome cannot provide.

There are five criteria that must be met in order for NDM to be an effective way to observe and draw conclusions from observations: proficient decision makers, process orientation, situation-action matching decision rules, context-bound informal modeling, and empirical based prescription (Lipshitz et al., 2001). The foremost criterion of importance to be met is the involvement of a proficient decision maker, one who has been employed or present within the decision making context for several years. Process orientation denotes what information is gathered, what the decision makers actually seek, how they process that information, and what rules they use to make decisions. Situation action matching decision rules govern the process by which decision makers match situations with the proper decision, taking into account the circumstantial influences which determine what actions the decision maker will take. Context-bound informal modeling suggests that experts rely on experiential knowledge in what information they obtain, and the arguments they use in the decision process. The last criterion is empirical-based prescription. The prescriptions made from NDM should not be unattainable, and only feasible prescriptions that enhance the decision maker's ability to

accomplish his or her end goal should be put forth, based on the observations made and not on a lofty ideal.

The relevance of information flow in decision making is vital, so as not to force feed the decision maker until he or she chokes. The information flow must be regulated in order to maximize the decision maker's ability to make the best decision given the circumstances. This ties back to bounded rationality (March, 1994; Kahneman, 2003). An overabundance of information or of options for possible action may overload the decision maker, and reduce his or her efficiency (Montgomery, Lipshitz, & Brehmer 2005). Thus allowing the decision maker to allocate his or her own resources in order to obtain and process information which is likely to lead to a stronger decision making process. Given this information, it is crucial to select the proper sample for an NDM driven study, the sample must have independence and the resources to properly acquire information pertinent to the context in which they are making the decision.

METHOD

Participants

The goal of this thesis was to probe into the decision making processes of HR experts in their natural environment. The sample was purposefully engineered to meet the first qualitative research criterion according to Lipshitz et al. 2001: the proficient decision maker. The sample was comprised of 20 HR experts in a diverse selection of organizations from locations across the United States. The types of organizations which comprised the sample included manufacturing, public services, healthcare, and service organizations (Appendix A). The sample is thought to represent the current balance of organizations within the United States.

The sample of this study was selected to meet the five primary criterion of NDM. Interviewees must have been in the HR field for roughly 5 years or more and with their current organization for at least one year. They must have had sole ownership over previous decisions and implementations done within their organization to qualify. Organizational standards were put in place, such that the organization must have a HR department and employ at least 25 individuals, with no maximum restriction. The lower limit of 25 employees was put in place to insure that the organization would have a strategic HR department, rather than just an individual in charge of paperwork.

Tools

A preparation guide was developed (Appendix B) to send to participants twenty-four hours prior to the scheduled interview time. The preparation guide included the research purpose, confidentiality clause and a future oriented scenario detailing the criteria for the interview.

Please imagine the following scenario: You are approached by _____ (a senior leader) in your organization who mentions that the organization needs a new _____ practice/system (your choice of practice), because the previous practice/system was unsuitable. You will be asked to describe the process of adoption during the interview.

-Appendix B

Additionally, a demographic questionnaire was attached to the preparation guide to gather experiential and organizational data. The questionnaire determined the first criterion of NDM, the experienced decision maker, by determining degrees earned and years working in the HR field. Organizationally related questions were asked to get a glimpse of the company's approximate 2007 revenue and employee population.

The second tool used in this research was the semi-structured interview protocol (Appendix C). The semi-structured interview guide was used to meet the context-bound informal modeling, process orientation and empirical based prescription criteria of Lipshitz et al. 2001 by detailing the decisions and information used by HR experts through future oriented open ended questions. "What would be your next step or decision? Why would this be your next step or

decision?” In order to determine the rationale for decisions made during the implementation process, the question: “What factors would you consider in taking this step or decision?” was asked. To complete each stage during the interview, the HR expert was asked about possible contingencies: “What alternatives would you consider in lieu of this step or decision? Why?” These questions were asked until the HR expert reached the end of their implementation process.

Once the implementation reached the final phase each stage was reviewed with the HR expert to determine possible problems they would anticipate during their implementation process. “At any stage that you have described, do you anticipate problems? How would you manage these problems?” This series of questions continued to tap into HR experts’ experiential knowledge.

The interviewees were then asked how they had learned the implementation and decision process throughout their career. To follow up, HR experts were then asked to detail the learning process of new HR managers. Finally, HR experts were asked if they had any additional comments to give them the opportunity to fill in anywhere that the protocol may have missed.

Procedure

Contact was made with willing HR experts, either through convenient network connections or cold-calling. After securing their consent, the interview was scheduled to occur either by phone or in person based on the HR expert’s location. The interviewee

was sent the preparation guide (Appendix B) twenty four hours prior to the interview time.

Each interview was tape recorded with the permission of the HR expert, and they were guaranteed anonymity and confidentiality. A model was created to best fit the interviewee's description of their decision making processes. This model was presented to the interviewee for revisions and clarification. Any and all revisions and clarification were made to the models, and recorded.

In preparation for qualitative analysis, each interview was transcribed. Once transcribed, the interviews were loaded into Nvivo, the qualitative analysis software package (screen shots of the software interface can be found in Appendix D). The first step in this process was open coding, where the interviews were read for broad topics and common themes seen throughout the interviews. Major themes which emerged in the open coding process were buy-in, experiential learning and informal mentoring. In order to guide the analysis, three initial interviews were coded and reviewed by another researcher. Corrections in the direction of coding were made to those three interviews to set a standard for the remaining 17. The next step in the analysis process was axial coding, wherein major themes were developed from related topics, which were seen to be dependent on each other. Axial coding was constructed around topics such as information seeking, communication, execution and embedment and the ways HR Experts learned, which included the open-coded themes of school and experience. Finally, to determine the consistency of coding, a confirmation check was performed by another researcher.

RESULTS

The HRM Practices Model from Subramony & Feinauer (working paper) (Figure 4) was supported and extended based on the patterns found in the analysis of the 20 HR experts of this study. Subramony & Feinauer focused on past implementations and what had already worked for the HR expert, allowing for 20/20 hindsight to identify processes that may be more latent, such as the first two stages of their model: problem recognition and information searching. This research focused on implementations that had not yet occurred, allowing the HR expert to create his or her own implementation process, unique to the context of his or her specific organization. That led to an emphasis on the third and fourth stages of the HRM Practices Model: issue selling and resource selection.

While there is strong support for the HRM Practices model, our findings suggest the model should be modified and extended to encompass a broader range of HRM practices. The issues selling portion of the original model should be broadened to ‘communication phase,’ and two additional stages should be added to carry the HRM practice through to the final stages. We propose to add the two stages of ‘execution,’ and ‘process embedment.’

Information Search

In the phase of information searching, three major themes emerged: organizational feedback, consideration of parallels in other organizations, and consulting firm data-bases.

Internal Organizational Feedback.

A logical major theme to arise in this phase was the internal organizational feedback. Since the HR expert is embedded within the organization, he or she is aware of the specific needs when implementing new practices, or reviewing old ones.

... There are a lot of neat ideas out there; we don't have to reinvent the wheel. We can take these ideas and see if they fit and if they don't we can tweak them. ... So we have our same story, we'll customize it to our specific audience. So for example I support R&D and marketing, so I can tell my story, then I can say "Don, here is what I am thinking about you and your functions, some of the opportunities in the data. What do you think?"

- Senior HR generalist of a biotechnology firm

I began to talk to the people at the mills. The mills are the ones that are going to take the burden of this process... we talked about it, and we bounced it around and we got their feedback from it. ... And reviewed that with the top leadership, the key feedback pieces we got was filled with emotion ... So we dealt with that directly.

-Director of HR for a manufacturing company

Making sure by walking around that it is alive and real. Listening to conversations. Am I getting complaints from new employees, are they getting back to me if they don't come to me directly?

-VP of HR for an insurance company

External Inspiration.

The second information gathering technique most commonly brought up by HR experts was the use of other organizations. This is consistent with the literature that suggests business professionals are likely to seek information from other organizations (Rynes et al. 2002). Methods used by HR experts were identifying similar organizations and borrowing from their already established practices, and utilizing HR peer social networks.

Well sure, you could migrate what other people have done. Stand on the shoulders of giants, if there's a like and similar company that has already validated a process or has something that is working for them and has results we want, we can just migrate that best practice instead of going through the effort ourselves. ... A lot of times they want to brag about it ... it could be a presentation ... what articles they've written on ... there's a lot of people in the HR world who work different places ... so with their knowledge and understanding of how a benchmark works may come with them.

-VP HR for a consultant company

Sure, you could like I said, use your local network groups. A lot of HR professionals use them, each belongs to the local SHRM, human resources management group. And that can be used to help with research. Talking with other people in the community, what they do. And what's worked for them and what has not worked for them?

-HR manager of a manufacturing company

Consultants.

Another common theme in the information search phase of HR implementations was the use of consultants. This was information pre-digested and readily available to the HR expert. Consultants are also seen in a confirmatory role, allowing the HR expert to use their assistance as a credible source for the upcoming implementation.

It is good to have in your back pocket what other companies are doing... there are a couple of key consulting groups, and [we] work with a lot. And if you can get some of their research, or even their opinions on the matter that helps as well too. Usually you have one main contact who is the top dog from a certain consulting group let's say, and if they can back you up that's very helpful.

-Director of HR for a manufacturing

Luckily in North Carolina we have a couple of consulting firms that we can ask questions to, to find out these things. One being Human Resource Management, they have a great website that you can go to and see what is out there. Also in North Carolina there is a website called CAI, the name of the company, it is again an HR consulting firm that keeps HR managers at all levels up to date on what is the latest out there, and what are other companies doing. You can actually email with questions, and the email will go out to all the other people in this list. And then the people will

email back what their practices are, what is going right for them. That is really where you find out what is going on.

- HR manager of a technology firm

Communication

A vital stage in the HR practices process, this stage focuses on three major aspects of how communication occurs in an organization during the pre-implementation phases of a process: consensus, buy-in and championing.

Consensus.

This aspect of the communication phase is largely an advertising campaign, using word of mouth and other avenues within the organization to spread the good word of the upcoming implementation. It is an opportunity to pique interest and energy levels throughout the organization for the execution phase. This aspect of the communication phase is vital. If it is not done appropriately, or given enough time during the implementation, it may result in blow-back or dissent from employees, which have been identified as potential problems in implementations.

So in a big organization like this, the communications process is a key thing. And so what I am actually doing right now is I am going and visiting all of the [branches]. I was in Maine Tuesday presenting “This is what we are doing and why are we are doing it.” I was engaging in the debate, people became somewhat emotional, very emotional about their

views ... And talking about why we decided to do that, and dealing with it head on. So you sort of diffuse that. Getting alignment. Acknowledge that we understand their perspectives, and have considered them, and sort of selling them the art of this.

-Director of HR for a manufacturing company

Historically when I have done launches, at least here, it has typically been, some preview announcements, weekly updates, we kind of put a preview in there. Then we'll typically do a meeting where we'll launch and go through the details. Probably prior to that I would have a meeting with just managers, so that they understand and can communicate with their employees after their meetings. So they are able to ask questions they have. And then typically there is follow up ... And then with something like this, there would be a component of it that would be incorporated into things like performance reviews and things like that. So they constantly make sure that people are reminded of that.

-Director of HR for a biotech firm

... Number one would be making sure that there are things that are going on at the same time that we are trying to implement it because that would diminish the support or any excitement that we had garnered from the communications that we have put out saying why we want to help them, and how this is going to make a difference in their work lives, to make their lives easier by giving them these additional things ...

-VP of HR for a non-profit

Buy-in.

The buy-in aspect of the Communication phase targets key members of the organization, usually executive boards and leaders. Without their support the implementation process will not have authorization or the appropriate support.

I would let the leadership team know that this is something we are looking to investigate for the organization so they are fully aware right up front, so I won't have any surprises for anybody four to six months down the road. ... So I get that consensus and buy in as soon as possible, in this case the senior leadership team is an important step. And then the next step we would do is get a small task force put together so we could continue the multi-department buy-in and support of the project.

-VP of HR for a service company

...specific to our culture, is that before you talk to or our leader in HR you have to make sure to talk to everyone on that leadership team, to get their opinion, to get their view point before you go in to talk to the key leaders in the company so that you have kind of their buy in even before presenting, so that everyone in around the table you would have talked to individually one on one before you go in to present your case where they are all together to make the decision. I think that you need to for a company.

-Director of HR for a manufacturing company

Championing.

A more specific avenue of the communication phase is the ordination of a champion. This individual takes it upon himself or herself, usually on top of his or her usual work load to promote the implementation and keep it alive. His or her duty to the implementation often does not have a set end point, and can reach long into the embedment phase to keep the implementation afloat in the organization.

I think a first step would definitely be making sure that we're fully in line with our CEO in terms of his expectations. And then identify who the key stakeholders are in the organization who are going to need to be involved in either developing and executing this strategy and getting them in place. I would leverage our CEO for that purpose. Basically we need a champion. ... basically reaching out to those stake holders and creating a governance process for this. Making sure that we're all on the same page, and that the right people are involved in doing this, that decision making. So we can make sure all of that – that we have a solid foundation before we move forward and actually try to implement. ... That is going to involve engaging others like our HR process owners, because part of the strategy would be integrating the competencies into all of our HR processes. I would imagine this would be a global effort, we would want to identify not just that senior leadership, but those that would be more on the ground coordinating the implementation.

-HR Manager of a manufacturing company

I was the project champion on it I was the mentor where if she needed help she came and asked for it. I was also the supervisor in the sense that I would touch base with her maybe once a month to see how things were going on that. So definitely a coach mentor. ... So a lot of the times I am not handling the actual implementation, I am championing things to make sure that they get done.

-VP of HR for a service company

Resources

A serious consideration in any decision making process is the resources available to the expert. Many of the decisions made by HR experts are inextricably tied to the business's financial outcomes and are monitored by senior executives. Other initiatives around the organization cause competition for resources on top of already stretched budgets.

... I am going to be thinking about timing of other initiatives within the organization. I'm going to be thinking about resources availability, space availability, and do we have appropriate resources on site for what it is that we want to do. You know size of the room, computer set up stations, and we are going to need that or not need that sort of thing. So there is technology issues, there is resources issues which would mean people, it could be things that we give new hires, you know that creation of the

training, strategic initiative, and the number of new hires that we bring on in a year.

-VP of HR for a service company

You know when I put together time element, cost element, some of those indefinite factors in addition to the benefits gained. Because they are certainly going to be interested in that as well. ... Not just hard dollars, but time ... invested in their development. What I would expect to see input of this is how you would measure success. ... I want to know what they are going to ask ... we have a finance person here who is very black and white and procedural, she needs to look at things step by step by step. So I am not going to put that level of detail in my recommendation.

-VP of HR for a service company

I think that maybe prior to the planning process, you start to get into a resourcing process. So you need to identify the resources required even to do the planning. And then you have to identify the resources that are going to be required to execute. You need to be real candid about this. Because underestimating the resource requirements will lead to failure.

-Director of HR for a manufacturing company

Execution

With alignment obtained through buy-in and the champion's tireless work, the implementation process moves into the execution phase. Here the organization's cogs

begin to turn, and change begins to take place. As the nature of our study interview allowed for various types of implementations, a standard list of steps for the execution phase is not addressed in this thesis. However common themes such as context bound, and internal and external assistance were found independent from the type of implementation described.

Context Bound.

A major theme which arose as the execution phase began to escalate was the contextual consideration of the employees, or those who would be encountering the burden of the implementation and the organization. HR experts had to consider in what ways the implementations would affect employees, as they are the individuals most affected by the new process being introduced.

The one thing, I am going to be looking for in this new idea- have I really taken into consideration how this is going to impact the people that are going to be affected by my decision? Obviously, throughout the stages so far I am trying to think ahead and identify those impacts either negative or positive with the individuals I am working with. How is this really going to impact them?

-Director of HR for a city government

In essence since it is not adding value for the employee it's not adding value for the company. ... we are going to basically turn around their performance management process ... get away from any concept of review, or backwards looking, any scoring. ... employees typically

looking more forward to achieving competencies. ... Management teams work with employees and identify their talents building on their strengths and moving forward.

-HR manager of a service company

Additionally, HR experts considered how the organization as a whole would be affected by the implementation.

Because of our business strategy is changing, and the old way of behaving and doing things is no longer working for us. Our CEO has identified areas where we have gaps and where the new business strategy is going to require some new behavior. So I guess one that would be an example, an actual example of something we are going through here at our company is that there is more emphasis on globalization and the organizations are becoming more global so there is more of an emphasis on having to think globally. Think more from a system's perspective. And even more importantly working together across what were traditionally very specific functional boundaries, and people having to now learn "how do I work together with people from different disciplines and different areas? How do I work globally, how do I understand and work effectively with people with different back grounds- both cultural as well as functional, or where they are in the business."

-HR manager of a manufacturing company

And it is coming from the fact that in our international branches, two of our biggest and most successful international branches, the leaders are looking forward to retiring in five-six-seven years. Obviously, with a lot of companies in the United States, our population is aging now. You have to look at it, the total environment is putting some pressure on that. It is also marvelous for development, who in the pipe line and whatever.

- Senior HR generalist of a biotechnology firm

Assistance.

The forms of assistance identified by HR experts involved the usage of external consulting firms, external vendors, and internal human resources. The type of assistance available to an organization was pre-determined in the resource selection phase. Execution is when the resources are put to use and whatever assistance available is put into action. HR experts used these resources to offer additional perspectives or expertise which would ultimately strengthen their implementation processes.

I might look at some external vendors, maybe, who might help with some of this communication, branding around some of it. What the key messages are. Those kinds of things.

-HR manager of a manufacturing company

There are a couple of key consulting groups, that we work with a lot. And if you can get some of their research, or even their opinions on the matter that helps as well too. Usually you have one main contact who is the top dog from a certain consulting group let's say, and if they can back you up

that's very helpful.

-Director of HR for a manufacturing company

...In order to get something done, you need one person, or a couple of people would be better, that knows the ins and outs and everything there is to know about the new system. A lot of things die on the vine because they are just good ideas, and nobody has the back ground and the where-with-all, the knowledge to actually roll it out. ... The first thing that I would do, I would sit down with my compensation and benefits manager that reports to me, and we would talk about various types of compensation systems and what we feel might be more appropriate for the [organization]. That's where we'd start, step one.

-Director of HR for a city government

Embedment

Embedment is the final stage of HRM process implementation. This step can be enigmatic, as many companies consider their implementations to be 'fire and forget,' but lament that it is a major missing feature to most implementations carried out. This is supported in our study as one of the most common problems encountered by the HR experts - a lack of follow through after the new process is rolled out.

Feedback Metrics.

Feedback was considered to be the most common follow up metric to monitor the repercussions of the implementation process. It was most often achieved in the form of

an employee opinion survey and in unofficial dialogues within the organization. These metrics give HR experts the opportunity to collect longitudinal data and to be able to determine significant differences that emerge in the organization after the implementation is complete.

It's the initial feedback, as we are doing the first step, the new evaluation, what challenges are we experiencing? An open dialogue with those who are doing it. So the steps are evaluation would be, again, feedback from both leadership and chatting with some of the staff who had the evaluation ... talking to some of the folks immediately, and also from the evaluation stand point we would be looking at employee opinion survey where we do measure opinions about performance evaluation process. So we would look to see what their significant differences upward or downward in the ratings.

-Director of HR for a service company

I would probably do some sort of employee opinion survey at some point. And try to target it around what am I really targeting. Which I think is in the initial phase of that awareness and understanding of the new competency model and what does it mean to me. And how is it going to help the business, why is it important? And all of that. So I would do some sort of employee opinion survey. And I think I would also have in place, whatever communication tool that I am using and often times, one that we've used fairly successfully, and is pretty common is to have some

sort of intranet sight that employees can go to for information. So maybe hits on that sight, and some initial things. It's an initial way to finding out if people are actually going, are they curious enough to go look and learn more about this. Starting up a way for employees to provide feedback on it, through an email account or something like that. And then growing into something like an employee opinion survey.

-HR manager of a manufacturing company

The final step would be when we take the survey, the division survey of everyone. And look to see if we really make a difference. And that's determining when that should be done. Are you going to see measured progress six months later, three months later, a year later, two years later, whatever it is. And determining that and how often it should be done. As well as seeing what other weaknesses come out of it. ... Making sure data is being analyzed properly. Relooking at the questions to make sure we want to keep all the questions we have ... looking at the survey instruments itself, and making sure it captures what we want to measure.

-VP of HR for a non-profit

Continuous Improvement.

Using the information obtained from the feedback and survey metrics, HR experts revisit aspects of the implementation to refine them. This piece of the embedment phase emphasizes the monitoring and readjusting of the actions taken during the execution phase. The range of continuous improvements made by our

interviewees ranged over a large spectrum from changing the color of paper used for forms to complete and total overhauls of unsuccessful implementations.

In the final phase of it, is it to define the system of approving the process. That's sort of doing that consciously. So an important process like this, we need to recognize in advance that we are going to need to contentiously improve it. How are we going to do that, who is going to be involved and sort of doing it consciously? And I think that's the real critical [step] – you have to be clear on what are the outcomes you want, and how are we going to assess it. ... I think clarity around what we're trying to achieve is a big thing. ... How can we measure our success? I think that's a big factor. I think another big factor is candid assessment and honest self-critique. We will always want to celebrate our successes, but it is more important to have a candid assessment. Is this really working? How do we get the criticism along with the praise?

-Director of HR for a manufacturing company

Nothing is ever done. If I think about processes and your scenario, I've absolutely had it where someone said 'you know we have this great incentive plan, that is not working, why isn't it working what do we need to do?' I have absolutely sat down and we've redesigned it, gotten rid of it, did whatever we needed to do. So you are never done. So that you are always reviewing things, you are always coming back to things and trying to make them better. ... It's a loop, there is not a beginning or an end. It

is a perpetual loop.

-VP of HR for a service company

The embedment aspect of HRM implementations appears to be the most neglected aspect of the process. However its success also seems to be the most sought after aspect of the implementation process. The HR experts seemed disconcerted about the neglect, and frequently admitted weakness in the face of embedment processes.

The original HRM Practices Model comprised of four stages from the problem recognition phase ending at the resource selection phase. Considering the emergent themes of this sample of 20 HR experts, a new HRM Practices Model is proposed (Figure 5). The first stage in the model, remaining unchanged from the original model, is problem recognition. It is concerned with the problem type, first identifier and then context. The second stage of information searching starts with the strategy employed by the HR expert, and then incorporates the sources of the information and the contingencies encountered. The third stage has been renamed from 'selling issues' to 'communication' to encompass a larger variety of methods employed by HR experts to ensure the longevity and acceptance of the implementation. This stage focuses on organizational consensus, buy-in and implementation champions, as well as possible contingencies. The last stage of the original model was resource selection. This stage encompasses the selection strategy used, the selection criteria employed by HR experts and the contingencies.

There are two additional stages which emerged as major over-arching themes throughout the analysis of this data, the execution phase and the embedment phase.

During the execution phase the context within the organization is considered: the employee impact, and the environment which the organization operates in. Second the need for assistance is evaluated, whether it can be handled internally (e.g. inter-departmental), or externally (e.g. consultants or vendors). Third, the contingencies are considered (e.g. alternatives to standard operating procedures), as are the constraints placed on the HR expert via resources and time.

The final phase of this model is the embedment phase, wherein the HR expert or the implementation champion attempts to monitor and if needed to continuously improve upon the implementation using the feedback sources available to them. Feedback metrics are put in place to monitor the implementation, whether they are informal (e.g. the water cooler), or formal (e.g. employee opinion surveys and financial statements). Continuous improvement is another and an important aspect of the embedment phase, which is either achieved by an active approach (e.g. retooling elements of the implementation), or is simply neglected and no actions are taken. As with all the stages of this model, contingencies must be considered. During the embedment phase, active contingencies can include major shifts in organizational strategy or unforeseen environmental shifts. Abandonment can occur when the implementation phases out, or when the change is seen as no longer being beneficial to the organization.

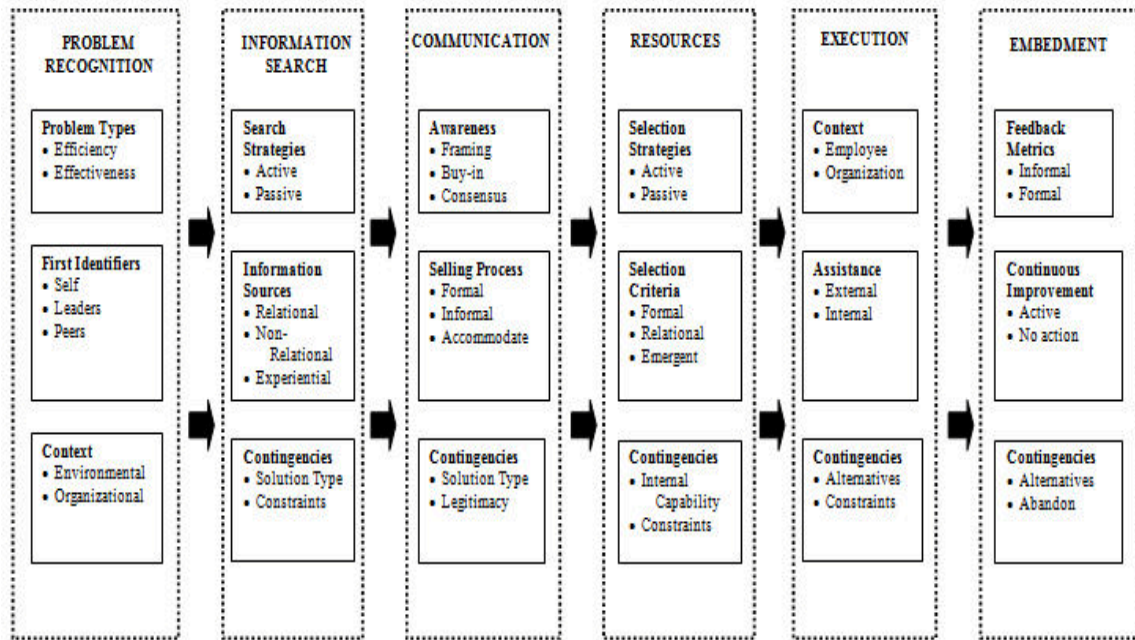


Figure 5. HRM Process Implementation Model

Problems Encountered During Implementation

A large portion of the interview focused on how HR experts would address problems that would arise in the course of their decision making process. This tapped into the experience of the experts and their ability to perceive and react to changes in the environment. As the various decision making processes differed among interviewees, 23 different problems were identified. The most common themes shared were compiled into the categories of time, buy-in, dissenters, no follow through, the right people, and unreliable information.

Time proved to be the most common issue reported by 45% of HR experts. Time restraints were experienced both in scheduling issues and

execution deadlines. This problem was not confined to one particular stage of the implementation process, but found throughout.

Time would be an issue because you are talking about other higher level HR professionals and it's always difficult to get them to sit down and actually spend time talking to you about your organization because they are always very busy worrying about their own organization.

-HR Director of a city government

People don't want to hear something that is a pilot test, they want to go live with it immediately, people will be urgent, if you need to do a pilot, sometimes they will be too urgent and not let the pilot work the way it should. And just want to execute. That can bring a lot of stress on it. Quite honestly, I hear instead of "pilot," people want to hear "soft launch" or whatever, they don't want to "pilot it" because if it doesn't work, we won't do it. So if this is just a pilot – why should I put a lot of effort into it? ...

-VP of HR for a consulting company

Obtaining the buy-in from the organization's employees or leaders was considered to be a constraint by 45% of HR experts interviewed. Without the buy-in from major players within the organization an implementation is bound to fail. Buy-in was a major step in the communication phase of HRM Practices Implementation, supporting the importance of this phase prior to implementation.

Well, first of all you can have non-alignment, where it's somebody's

vision but not a shared vision. A variation of that is surface alignment.

Where people pretend that they are okay with it, but really are not.

-Director of HR for a manufacturing

Final buy in, obviously there's always the pocket veto. Where they nod and say yes, where they really give you the resources. Or when push comes to shove they won't follow the process. So getting really deep true buy in versus just surface buy in I think is something you really need to do.

-VP of HR for a consulting company

Yeah it's buy in. ... there's always someone, even when you've got HR on, senior leadership is on, directors on, but here's a manager, saying "this isn't for me." How do you convince them? Sometimes you can't convince them ... it's a problem because you don't want to see it, you want people to understand why you are doing it and buy into and make it work. When you believe in it, it's easier to make it happen.

- HR manager of a service company

Dissent or pushback from various pockets within the organization was a potential problem identified by 40% of HR experts, which shows a consistent pattern with both the buy-in aspect of the communication phase, and the context bound consideration in the execution phase.

There is always going to be somebody that says "We shouldn't do this, and here's why." So you have to be prepared, it's like getting ready for a

trial, or whatever it is. Be prepared for the hurdles, try to recognize what they are going to be in advance, so you can sort of build up your little toolbox so when you are ready when people come and try to take shots at you when you try to implement something. ... If you can defuse it right there really quick, the chances of it ever getting legs and going farther and farther, you really just squash that. ... And maybe that's your chink in your armor and you can't move past it, and you need to consider what you are doing here. ... you are never going to make everybody happy. Some employees are squeakier than others.

-Director of HR for a city government

You want to make sure that everybody is onboard. You can't have any dissenters in this, so once you make this massive change, it's done. There are going to be some who dissent, or who don't understand, or disagree. But you need to have most people aboard, the ones that are going to be in a leadership role. The employees working with the people in the union, or whatever, who may be these dissenters, we need to influence them as to why or to see the other side.

- HR manager of a service company

I would say there are a few managers that I don't think will get on board regardless of recommendation. And then there is the decision of- [which] will probably come down to them ... if you don't want to go on the train with us, then sorry you are going to have to get off the train. ... And that

goes back to why I see potential for at least one of two managers to say “this is not my gig.” “I don’t want to talk to my employees.” Which actually if they can come to that realization on their own I would prefer that. And for us to say you’re not part of being a manger here if, maybe this is not for you. And then we’ll allow them to make their choice based on that.

-HR manager of a service company

Lack of follow through was identified as a typical issue in organizations from the perspective of 40% of HR experts. With HR experts expressing an interest, and given the evident value of this stage, it was frequently seen to be a problem that organizations did not give the embedment phase of the implementation process enough consideration.

The biggest problem is not doing it. And I think that you will see that with a number of HR initiatives. Because it is the easiest thing to not do. You roll something out, and hey it’s good. How do we know that? They don’t have any other option so yeah there option is good, but really how do our employees feel about it? And it’s the easiest thing; I mean it’s time consuming but it’s one of the most important pieces of it. Because the company is making an investment in a new process, a new procedure, a new initiative, it’s still a business.

-VP of HR for a service company

Just the problem with follow-through. Making sure that we do follow through. And again, we get there, but it might take time. ... Only thing that happens with us is, you forget why you are collecting the data. Why are you keeping this spread sheet? I've just been doing it for five years, then you actually look at it. Well I don't know? I know I do it for them. But when was the last time they looked at it? I don't know I just put it out there. So that's one- we'll find a lot of legacy activities where they have just taken on a life of their own.

-Senior HR Generalist of a biotechnology firm

Many of the implementations HR experts discussed relied heavily on delegating responsibility, and delegation issues were reported as a problem by 35% of HR experts. This problem ties into the usage of cross-functional groups by HR experts. Whether the groups consisted of senior leaders or subordinates, the HR experts relied on these groups to ensure a successful implementation.

I foresee making sure you have the right people, to get the right people, and from there making sure those people that you would like also have an interest, and it's not a lack of interest in that process. I would see those two as problems.

-Director of HR for a service company

The leaders that are involved in this aren't committing to it. Or potentially some people that are in the program, they don't want to be, they are not interested in these projects, maybe they are resisting.

-VP of HR for a service company

We could find that people are looking at the data and don't understand it, or they are misinterpreting it or they are over using it and letting it make the decision for them. ... You can't just turn your back and expect it to continue. You have to continue to give it attention and refine it and make sure people are using it correctly. The system will only be as good as the people who are employing it and using it. A lot of times people underestimate the skills...

-VP of HR for a consulting company

As shown in information gathering phase, HR experts relied heavily on information they had gathered both internally and externally. A concern that 35% of HR experts expressed was the potential that the information that they had acquired was either absent or unreliable. This finding is consistent with the theory of bounded rationality (March, 1994; Kahneman 2003) where decision makers operate with flawed or absent information. The perceived problem of unreliable information reinforces the importance of a rigorous and well planned information gathering phase early on in the implementation process.

Getting buy-in from the group, also I think it would be important at that stage, and talk about doing an outside-scan. Looking at other industries and organizations, what they are doing. Bringing that information back. Potentially getting that data accurately, and getting it reported out accurately. So finding that information. People to share from an external

perspective.

-Director of HR for a service company

Well, we might focus on the wrong things. That might be a problem. Or I pick the wrong design, that might be a problem. We might not drive what we want to drive. That might be a problem. ... we would make adjustments on the fly. We've done that in the past if we've made it, we realize we're still a small company ... if you need to make a decision you don't have 75 layers to get through. If something we thought would be a good decision, but turns out to not be such a smart decision, it really helps.

-VP of HR for a service company

Then in the next phase, the analytical phase, it is a common problem to have difficulties finding good meaningful metrics to use. We are often, although we prefer to be relying on objective data that is significant and clear in the story it is telling, that does not always happen. If we have the objective data, sometimes it tells us a different story from the perceived feedback that we are getting. So we need to balance both. ... Or the absence of the objective data period, where we're going to either need to wait and track things if that is important. Or if it is something that we are recognizing then we may be going off of anecdotal data. Off of conversational feedback in order to proceed.

-Director of HR for a service company.

Alternatives

HR Experts were asked at each stage of their implementation processes if they had any alternatives they may turn to. These alternatives are a sign that the HR expert has the ability to perceive issues that may arise and deal with the problems appropriately. The two most common alternatives mentioned were employee input and different modes of data collection.

Well, I think you could do a bottoms up approach, and say, do some sort of survey with employees, and say “If we were to have career pathing, what would you want it to look like? What is important to you?” Kind of grounds up.

-Director of HR for a biotechnology firm

One of the alternatives could be including the item our next employee opinion survey, just to watch trending on timeliness and value of performance evaluations. So alternative would be waiting and seeing what our next employee opinion survey suggests in terms of trend, are we trending better on evaluations being done timely and perceived value, or are we trending downward? That could be an alternative.

-Director of HR for a service company

CONCLUSION

The models introduced at the beginning of this research paper depict the current academic views of HR decision making and implementation. The model presented by Subramony & Feinauer (working paper) shows a necessity to create decision models using grounded theory and the NDM. The Rational Decision Making model (Birkinshaw et al., 2008) was not supported, given that HR experts interviewed operated on bounded rationality (March, 1994; Kahneman 2003), rather than complete rationality, as proposed by Birkinshaw. Additionally, HR experts operating within organizations could not risk trial and error executions, due to the buy-in requirement before anything could be rolled out.

The Cell Decision Making model (Reay et al., 2006) was created using grounded theory, but was done so with limited scope. Only viewing change from the employee perspective does not show the impact or processes involved with a true macro level implementation. Few, if any implementations will be problem free. In such cases, it is vital to have a weathered veteran present to use their experience to create alternative solutions based off of that experience, or empirically based prescriptions and context-bound information models according to Lipshitz et al., 2001.

The Issue Selling Decision Model (Dutton & Ashford, 1993) plays a small but integral part in the overall HR implementation process. It also appeared to be less of a convincing process; leaders did not have to be leveraged to see the need for implementation. However there was value found in a well-thought out

approach to leaders in the organization. The HR expert still had to present objective and well thought out information to proceed with the implementation.

Overall the themes found during the interviewing of 20 HR experts resulted in the support and extension of an original decision and implementation model pioneered by Subramony & Feinauer (working paper). More importantly, the contingency aspect of the HRM Practices Model was supported, suggesting the HR experts used their experiential knowledge to create alternative solutions to perceived roadblocks in the implementation process. This aspect of the HRM Practices Model is not reflected in the three previously discussed models. This research goes on to scratch the surface of how HR experts acquire the knowledge they use during this process.

Future Research

A route of future research which would prove to be greatly beneficial to organizations and schools alike would be to model the learning processes of HR experts. Closing the gap between new hires and weathered veterans of the HR world could potentially enhance the value of fresh graduates to organizations. Additional pre-employment knowledge would not only save the organization time and resources, but bring a more diverse and able work force to enhance preexisting HRM processes.

How can students get this experience? When HR experts were asked how they learned how to make decisions and handle the implementation process, the

three most commonly reported methods of learning were experiential learning and informal mentoring. Only 20% mentioned school, either at the undergraduate or graduate level.

Table 1

How experts reported learning HRM implementations.

<i>Theme</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Examples</i>
Experiential Learning	80%	<p>“Yeah, trial and error, really you can take all the classes you want ... you aren’t going to figure it out until you do it yourself.”</p> <p>“Over time, after trying to do things that are rational that didn’t work... I think there’s just trial and error...”</p>
Informal Mentoring	40%	<p>“I would say of both my undergraduate and master’s work ... sometimes you get lucky and work with somebody who has gone through it before and you can learn from them.”</p> <p>“In general mentoring. ... my biggest mentor was a plant manager that I worked for in a manufacturing firm.”</p>
School	20%	<p>“It did not fully prepared me, no, but it definitely gave me the footing I needed to start. I at least understood how to begin.”</p> <p>“I learned it on the job. You know, I take that back. I think I learned the concept in my operational management class. Some sort of concept, in my operation management class.”</p>

To obtain another perspective of how to learn process implementation and decision making, HR experts were also asked to speculate how a new HR

manager would learn the ropes in their organization. Among the most frequently reported ways HR experts learned the decision making and implementation process was informal mentoring and asking questions.

Table 2
How HR experts believe new HR members learn within their organization.

<i>Theme</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Examples</i>
Informal Mentoring	55%	<p>“So there is a lot of informal support and mentoring that occurs.”</p> <p>“There is no set process, it’s not documented. They need the right guidance, and usually people take them under their wing...”</p> <p>“They would learn it by a more experienced person. Attaching them to a mentor, even if they don’t call them a mentor, somebody who has more experiences and a successful record as far as implementing things.”</p> <p>“I would ask the questions.”</p>
Asking Questions	35%	<p>“... going to bounce it off each other and say, ok what do you think about this because they are going to be impacted in one way and somebody else is going to be impacted by another.”</p> <p>“A lot of asking questions and it is important to know no matter what position level that you come into the only dumb question is that one that you don’t ask.”</p>

The recommendations which appear evident from the responses of the 20 HR experts are that students should be involved in supervised internships to gain a mentoring and experiential knowledge base. Additionally, practicum courses offered by the school give students team-based leadership experiences in willing organizations. Ultimately, the education system should structure programs to

utilize action learning models based on performance on projects in and out of the class in order to best prepare the students for employment.

APPENDIX A
Sample Demographics

Sample Demographic data.

Education	Position	Org Type	Worked Total**	Worked Org**	Revenue	Employees
B.S. Business Admin, MBA-HR	VP HRA	Bank	16.5	1.5	350,000,000	120
BA HR, MS Org Behavior	HR Director	Healthcare	15	7		25,000
BSME, MSHR	Director of HR	Manufacturing	31	6	4,000,000,000,000	8,000
BS Public Admin Policy Analysis and Political Science.	HR Director	Government	10	7	Government Sector Non-Profit	2,700
Masters of HR and Labor Relations						
B.A. Org. Sociology, Juris Doctorate	Director of HR	Biochemical	10	0.9	32,000,000	170
BBA, HR and Marketing, MBA	VP HR	Service	12	4	100,000,000	120
BA in Psychology and History	Senior Staffing Consultant - HR	Healthcare	8.5	3.5	789,900,000	7,253
MBA, B.S. Business	VP HR	Service	19	12	350,000,000	500
BBA HR Resources	Corporate HR Manager	Service	11.5	11	40,000,000	190
BA in Bus. Admin and Business Economic	VP HR	Service	20	8	125,000,000	255
Comprehensive, and MBA Bachelors in Business Admin with emphasis on HR	Plant HR manager	Manufacturing	10	2	66,529,000	500
Management UW La Crosse						
M.S. Org Behavior	VP, Strategic Solutions	Consultant	16	1.25	8,000,000	34
B.A.	Director	Healthcare	15	9	10,000,000	240

Psychology, MS I/O Psych	of HR (exec. level)					
B.A. Business & Economics, MBA-HR	HR VP	Service	30	8	200,000,000	1,600
B.A. Business Administration, HR	HR Manager	Manufacturi ng	15	9	10,500,000	115
		Manufacturi ng				
		Manufacturi ng				
		Technology				
MA English, MBA OD	Sr. HR Generalis t	Biochemical	22	4	190,000,000 ,000	900
M.S. Administrative Management and BA in business HR	VP HR	Non-Profit	?	22	139,000,000	700

*16 Interviewees gave bio-data responses.

** Time worked measured in years.

APPENDIX B
Interview Preparation Guide

Pre-interview Preparation

As an experienced HR professional, you must have encountered many situations where certain HR practices (e.g., new compensation process, 360-degree feedback program, or OD intervention) were rejected by the organization, as well as situations where such practices were successfully adopted. I am very interested in identifying the characteristics of *successful adoption* and hope that you can help me in understanding what these characteristics might be. As part of the interview that you have agreed to participate in, you will be requested to *walk me through an adoption-process that is likely to be successful in your current organization*. Because, I am interested in *your opinion* of what would make an adoption process successful, I would be looking for a description of an adoption process that you would consider *ideal*, within the context of your current organization.

Pre-Interview Preparation:

- A. Please imagine the following scenario: You are approached by _____ (a senior leader) in your organization who mentions that the organization needs a new _____ practice/system (your choice of practice), because the previous practice/system was unsuitable. You will be asked to describe the process of adoption during the interview.
- B. Please complete the following background information about yourself:
- a. What degrees have you earned and in which field(s)?
 - b. What is your position or level in the organization?
 - c. What types of HR practices have you helped adopt/implement?
 - d. How long have you worked (total)?
 - e. How long have you worked for this organization?
 - f. What was the approximate revenue earned by your organization in 2007?
 - g. Approximately how many employees worked for your organization in 2007?

APPENDIX C
Interview Guide

Interview Guide

I have started the tape recorder to record this conversation so I may transcribe this interview at a later time, do you consent to this conversation being recorded? And please keep in mind that everything we discuss in this interview is confidential and all identifying tags will be removed from the transcript.

Please imagine the following scenario for a future HR implementation in your organization: You are approached by _____ (a senior leader) in your organization who mentions that the organization needs a new _____ practice/system (your choice of practice), because the previous practice/system was unsuitable. NOTE THE NAME/DESIGNATION OF THE LEADER AND A BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE PRACTICE.

ASK:

- Why is this new practice/system needed?
- What would be the preferred outcome for the adoption of this practice?
- What would be your first step or decision?
 - Why would this be your first step or decision?
 - What factors would you consider in taking this step or decision?
 - What alternatives would you consider in lieu of this step or decision?

Why?

~*Summarize progress so far.*~

- What would be your next step or decision?
 - Why would this be your next step or decision?
 - What factors would you consider in taking this step or decision?
 - What alternatives would you consider in lieu of this step or decision?

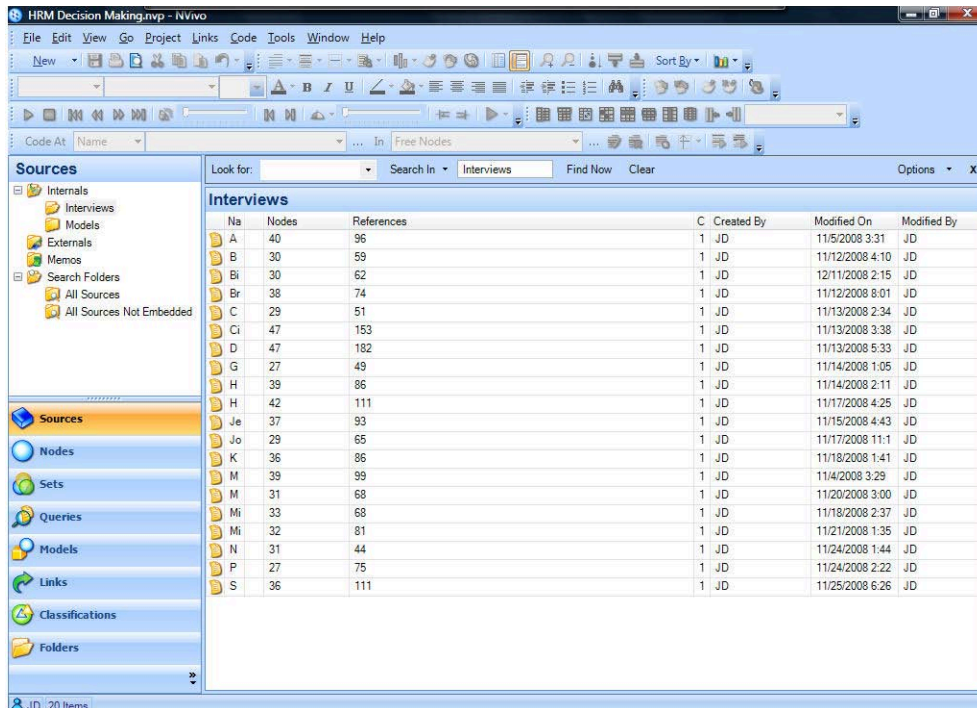
Why?

~*Summarize progress so far.*~

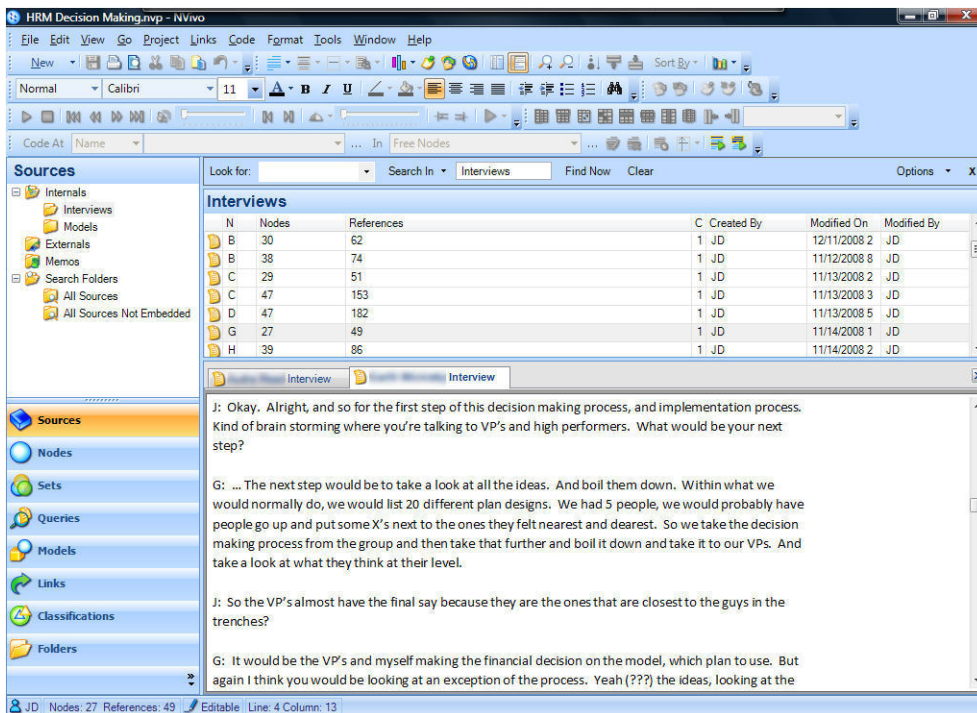
Repeat until outcome is obtained. Then summarize.

- ASK:
 - Is there anything you would consider after the implementation of the practice/system?
 - ~*Summarize phases*~ At any stage that you have described, do you anticipate problems? How would you manage these problems?
 - What is your total estimated timeline for the adoption process from the beginning to the end?
 - What would you estimate the costs to be for a practice/system like this?
 - How did you learn the implementation process?
 - How would a new HR manager in your organization do it?
- Am I leaving anything out?

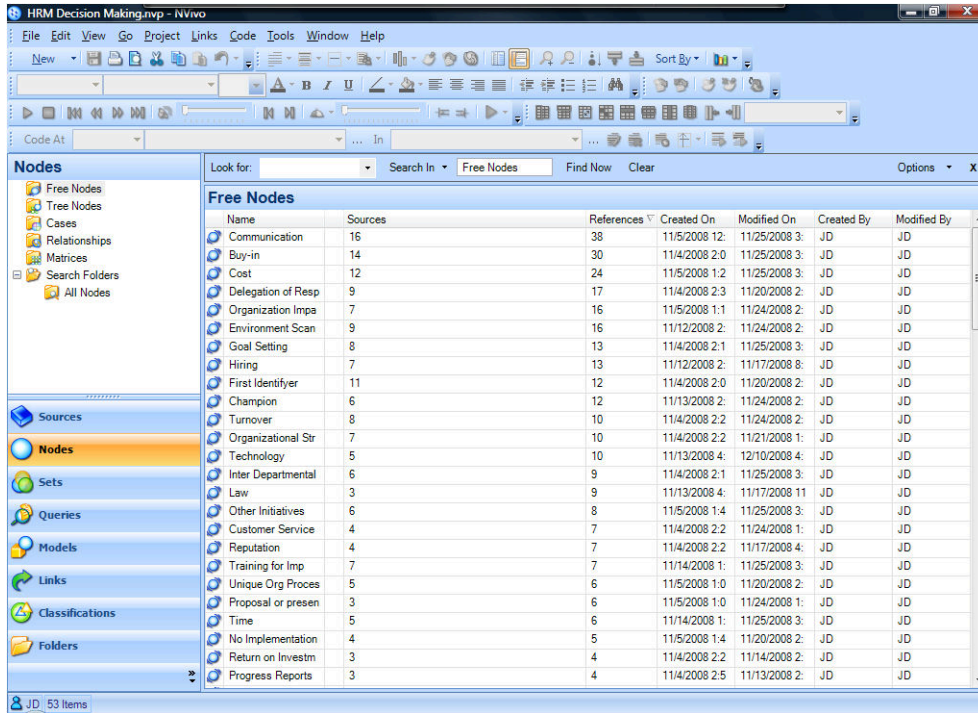
APPENDIX D
Nvivo Screen Shots



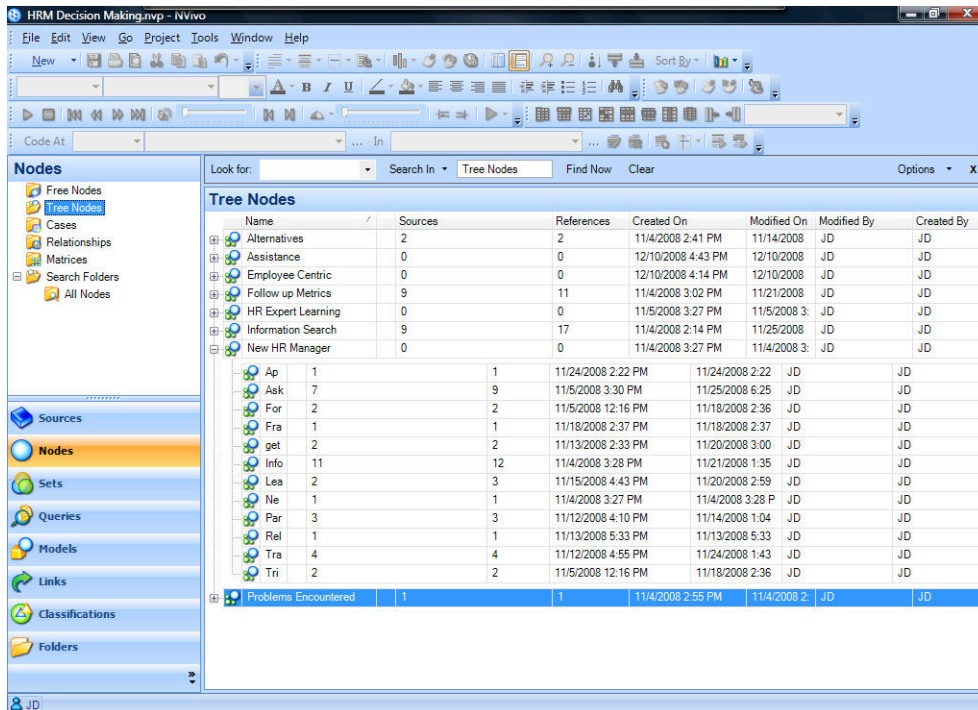
1. Showing the organization of interviews once input into the program.



2. Showing how interviews can be accessed.



3. A list of all of the open-coding nodes.



4. Showing the axial coding nodes.

The screenshot shows the NVivo interface with the 'Queries' pane selected. The 'Results' pane displays a table of query results. The table has the following data:

Name	Sources	References	Created On	Created By	Modified On	Modified By
Query Senior Leadership	20	244	12/1/2008 11:53	JD	12/1/2008 11:53 A	JD
Query Group	19	245	12/1/2008 11:53	JD	12/1/2008 11:53 A	JD
Facts	17	136	12/1/2008 11:52	JD	12/1/2008 11:52 A	JD
Query Analysis	14	45	12/1/2008 11:52	JD	12/1/2008 11:52 A	JD
Query buy in	14	69	12/1/2008 11:52	JD	12/1/2008 11:52 A	JD
Query proposal	14	54	12/1/2008 11:53	JD	12/1/2008 11:53 A	JD
Query ROI	7	26	12/1/2008 11:53	JD	12/1/2008 11:53 A	JD
Query brainstorm	5	19	12/1/2008 11:52	JD	12/1/2008 11:52 A	JD
Query Champion	5	13	12/1/2008 11:53	JD	12/1/2008 11:53 A	JD
Query Union	4	21	12/1/2008 11:53	JD	12/1/2008 11:53 A	JD
Query Union (2)	4	21	12/1/2008 2:01	JD	12/1/2008 2:01 P	JD
Query rumors	2	3	12/1/2008 11:53	JD	12/1/2008 11:53 A	JD
Query Government	1	7	12/1/2008 11:52	JD	12/1/2008 11:52 A	JD

5. Word search queries used to identify frequency of use.

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