

# PREFACE

The fourth edition of *Human Resource Management* continues with the dual goals of providing theoretical and experiential approaches to the study of human resource management while focusing on the enhancement of student competencies shown to be predictive of a student's ability to obtain and maintain employment. Students are given the conceptual background and content necessary to understand the relevant issues in HRM. In addition, they participate in individual and group exercises that require the application of chapter content to specific problems designed to develop critical personal competencies.

This new edition continues with the basic experiential approach but changes have been made to improve the text. First, more emphasis is placed on the implications of HRM issues and policies for general managers who apply HRM policy but also who have a profound effect on the success or failure of HRM. Second, more attention is paid to the implications of HRM for small business, where all HRM functions may rest with personnel also performing a myriad of other small business activities and with no formal training in HRM. I continue to point out discrepancies between HRM findings from research and the practice of HRM. I am happy to report that many of these discrepancies are closing as more HR specialists become aware of research on "high-performance work systems" and the growing body of literature linking particular HRM practices to corporate success.

Perhaps the most important improvement in the book is in the writing. An extra effort has been made to simplify and improve the writing and the transitions from chapter to chapter. This text remains the only HR book that attempts to directly link student learning experiences in HRM with assessed competencies judged by experts to be essential for graduating business students. Research on college of business graduates has been critical of the readiness of business graduates for work, noting deficiencies in a number of areas, including communication skills, analytical thinking, decision-making ability, and

leadership potential. While other experiential texts are available, this is the first to attempt to provide adequate coverage of the subject matter in each of the vital areas of HRM while preparing the student to "learn by doing." This is also the first attempt among HRM texts to provide a research-based methodology for the assessment of the critical competencies and to provide a process by which students may evaluate the extent to which they have improved their competencies as they progress through the course.

All the experiential exercises in this book were designed to enhance some or all of the critical personal competencies in the context of HRM subject matter. Participation in experiential exercises requires the application of the HRM knowledge expected of practicing managers and HR generalists. The experiential exercises were developed so as to facilitate greater learning through class interaction and projects. There is usually an individual writing component to the exercise followed by group interaction and consensus building. A study by Dr. Richard Light at Harvard University found that this approach to education is superior to other pedagogical options. While it may have something to do with the particular way I lecture, my 30 years of experience in teaching strongly support Dr. Light's research.

Successful completion of these field-tested exercises, combined with the assessment processes described in Appendix C, should foster student development in all the areas experts believe to be critical in preparing business students for their first "real jobs."

Studies show that the majority of business graduates will ultimately manage or supervise employees. Research in this area shows that the two areas that prove to be the most challenging for managers are performance management and dealing with an increasingly diverse workforce in the context of equal employment opportunity law. My objective in this book is to emphasize knowledge and direct experience in these areas without compromising treatment of the other domains of HRM.

Procedures are available in this text to require students to evaluate their own performance and that of peer group members after completion of most of the experiential exercises. As discussed in Chapter 7 (Performance Management and Appraisal), this multirater approach provides more valid information about performance and a useful frame of reference for monitoring performance improvements. Research also shows that the more experience a person has had with the performance management process, the more effective that individual is in fulfilling this important managerial responsibility.

Exercises and discussion questions have been incorporated that require the student to consider equal employment opportunity laws in particular HRM contexts. So, unlike the standard HRM text that may cover EEO issues in one chapter, this book compels the student to weigh the EEO implications of HRM activities such as job analysis (Chapter 4), downsizing programs (Chapters 5 and 12), personnel selection processes (Chapter 6), employee training and development (Chapter 8), performance appraisal (Chapter 7), compensation (Chapters 10 and 11), and other major HRM activities.

The most significant and contentious issues of the day are considered head-on in this text. For example, among the controversial topics covered in experiential exercises are ethnic score differences on employee screening devices, affirmative action programs and preferential treatment, the outsourcing of work overseas, binding arbitration agreements, sexual harassment policies, employment-at-will, random drug testing with no probable cause, smoking in the workplace, CEO and executive compensation, and equal pay for work of comparable worth.

Another distinctive feature of this book is that some chapters were written by experts in the HRM field. Experts were selected on the basis of their experience, knowledge, and research accomplishments in a particular area of HRM and/or their experience with well-tested, experiential exercises that foster learning in a critical HRM content area. Since HRM is strongly influenced by a number of disciplines (e.g., law, economics, psychology, sociology, strategic management), expertise was sought to represent these varied orientations. I believe the finished product represents a broader perspective than a book pre-

pared by an author from only one of those disciplines.

New “Critical Thinking Applications” (Appendix A) that concern some of the most important and timely issues of the day also have been added. Interwoven in each chapter of the book is an underlying theme of improving quality and increasing competitive advantage with more effective HRM practices compatible with the new research on “high-performance work systems.”

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