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**INTERVIEW IS THE MOST IMPORTANT TOOL IN  
HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT**

**Thesis**

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## Thesis Abstract

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| <p>The main point of this final thesis was to gather information about the topic of Human Resources Management and put it in a simple form for people, who are interested in becoming HR managers. The main focus was to show a perspective of a person who does not have experience in working for HR, and all of the presented knowledge is theory gathered from multiple sources. This thesis focuses on what skills should be expected of a good Human Resources manager, and how to conduct interviews, and it clarifies what different types of interviews there are. Most of the sources are from the internet, since it has a great number of small articles, each with their own different information, which through compiling it together helped make this whole thesis.</p> |              |                    |
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## 1. INTRODUCTION

A big part of our nowadays world is work and business. Corporations, companies, organizations etc. are a vital part of what we could call “career building”. The world of brands, trades, contracts, purchases, sales, processes and many others surrounds us just as you are reading this introduction.

However none of those could truly work, if not for the people, who tie it all together. We call them “managers”. Managers are very important in every company, organization etc. as the staff members, who coordinate all the parts of said company. Finances, production, purchases and sales, human resources and all the others, are guided by managers in order to maximize performance of each of them, while at the same time trying to improve the company itself. Think of a company as a clockwork. Every small piece has to work correctly in order for the whole machine to be good. Even if the production line makes great progress, it does not matter when the assembly line is working too slow. Also it can happen that if there were no problems with production, department of financing can create chaos, and company can get lost in its own taxes. Many things can go wrong and it is up to managers to keep everything on the right track, and lead the company to success.

What does one have to do in order to become a manager? What are the requirements to get a job, and how to introduce oneself as a leader to a completely new group of people? Whom to work with, and whom to manage? Those are a few of many questions people have to consider when thinking of becoming a manager.

The reason someone is right now reading this might be that they would like to become a manager in the future. This thesis focuses on management in Human Resources. I personally do not have any experience in the topic, and that is why the main point of this thesis was to gather the basic information about what to expect from HR, what kinds of skills an average Human Resource specialists should have, and why it is important to know about interviewing. First, the focus is on the general activities related to Human Resources Management (chapter 2), followed by what kind of skills are expected and recommended for an HR manager (chapter 3) and finally the structure and details of different types of interviews is discussed (chapter 4).

## **2. DEFINITION OF HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT**

As the name itself suggests, Human Resource Management basically refers to how well a manager controls the human resources, i.e. workers.

It does not matter how skilled and innovative every individual worker is. Each aspect of a company needs to be managed, and the working community is one of those. An HR manager has to make sure to hire people most suitable for their specific positions, he or she manages and supervises their training, coordinates different groups to have a good final outcome, and rewards the individuals for their acknowledgeable performance. Of course those things are just the tip of the iceberg that the real Human Resource Management is.

Being an HR specialist is not easy. This job requires a constant balance between meeting one's employees' aspirations and fulfilling the strategic and financial needs of the company one runs or just works for. To explain the role of Human Resource Management, we can identify the main four objectives that form the foundation of all its activities, which are discussed in the following chapters.

### **2.1 Staffing objectives**

HR managers must ensure that a company has proper staff members and thus is able to draw on the needed resources. This involves designing organization structures, identifying the type of contract for specific groups of employees to work under. Additionally before recruiting a manager needs to select and develop the most suitable people to fill in the roles the company needs them for (see chapter 4.1). Recruitment market is surprisingly competitive and every company has to be sure to employ the best people they can find. However skills are not the only thing. Affordability is the second, or sometimes the most important thing a manager will look at. Some companies create a so-called "package" of skills that they are looking at, which makes it easier to find suitable workers, by eliminating those, who do not fill in the requirements.

Some of the mistakes a company's HR manager can make is to create a non-realistic 'package' of skills to be required. For example a candidate might fulfil all the skills and experience that is required, but if a company offers too little payment for such a high-

skilled worker, it would be hard to find a person willing to accept the terms, and then also hold on to that person as an employee.

Some companies might add age as one of the requirements. There is a well-known legend about “some company” that has required a finished master-level study degree, five years of professional experience, and age up to 25 years-old. Not to mention the company offered minimal payment for the job itself. Through such an example it is easy to see how sometimes employers can forget themselves while writing the “job requirements and details” while making the job offer. As an HR manager it is important to make sure that the demands are possible to meet, and the reward (meaning payment) is equal and fair. (Mayhew 2015)

## **2.2 Performance objectives**

After the first stage, i.e. staffing the company, is finished, it is time to make sure all of the workers are motivated and committed (see chapter 4.2 - 4.4). That way one creates a base, which should help maximise the performance of employees. The basic thing to do is to organize training. It is important that each worker knows what his or her job is all about, how to do it properly, and to be informed about all safety precautions, evacuation drills and many others.

Training and development plays an important role in companies, since similarly to the reward system mentioned in part 2.1, it helps maximise the effort and gives stronger focus on what kind of performance is expected of workers. Part of achieving success in this area is not only to reward the workers for job well-done. Discipline is very important to be considered. HR managers need to be fair and strong, when it comes to reprimanding an individual or a group for unsatisfactory performance.

The last aspect of performance objectives cannot be directly enforced by managers. The only thing possible is to create a positive environment for the workers, and motivate them (see chapter 3.1 and 3.3). As a result workers may decide to work after hours, perhaps with the promise of extra payment, or just out of courtesy. For example if they have a very friendly relation with their manager, and feel like they want to help improve the company. Workers, who do not stay overtime, may instead choose to do work that exceeds the

expectations of their employer, and is not being restricted by the contract. There are many other ways in which employees show their willingness to engage in such behaviour, whether it lays in their morale, their motivation, or the actions themselves. A good HR manager is able to create such atmosphere that workers will not rue each work day. A great HR manager is able to improve the situation so much that employees will gladly try and work on creating a better future for the company. (Mayhew 2015)

### **2.3 Change-management objectives**

In practically every organization, company or business. Human Resource Management is necessary in order to take care of the changes that might occur overtime. Such changes do not come out of nowhere, and are not forced by external factors. Rather those changes are subtle, endemic and continuous, because what drives them is the general need to innovate. Such changes can have different forms. Some are just structural, such as reorganizing schedules, activities, introducing new staff members, or introducing people to new roles. Other times a change might mean a cultural change, where there is a need to establish new attitudes, philosophies or organizational forms.

That is again where HR comes in. Strong leadership and good connection with people can play a crucial role in containing or preventing eventual problems that come with altering the internal structure of the company, business or organization. If a manager lacks the necessary leadership skills, it is possible to recruit a new person, or develop those skills through obligatory training of the staff (see chapter 4.3). Through strong leadership a manager can make the change more acceptable for the workers, and will help implement such change into the working environment. Another very important thing is to construct a good reward system, so that the process of change is more permanent, and solid. Last, but not least, it is important not to forget to involve the employees! That way one ensures they get into terms with the whole situation easier, and will be more likely to support the cause, since they are part of the creation process. (Mayhew 2015)



## 2.4 Administration objectives

Administration is the fourth and last type of objective, and it is less directly related to being more competitive. It focuses on underpinning the achievement of all the previous objectives. Basically that means documentation. Every company, organization or business carries out their administration in order to have everything intact, easy to check and control, and to maintain the organization's smooth running. Because of that there is a need to maintain regularly updated and accurate data on individual employees, to record their achievements and progress in terms of performance, their attendance and training records, their terms and conditions of employment and of course personal details of each of them.

Another reason for administration objectives is connected to legal issues occurring during the life of a company. Companies need to create at least the simplest documentation system, because it is required by law. Significantly important is the requirement, which states that payment needs to be administered professionally and lawfully, with monthly pay statements being provided for each employee. It might sound confusing, but thanks to that workers get paid for their performance. Additionally there is the important legal need of arranging deduction for taxes and insurance. Other issues that cannot be forgotten are pension fund contributions, Statutory Sick Pay, and Statutory Maternity Pay. In addition, maternity and paternity leaves are connected to that. Additional legal demands focus on monitoring the health and safety systems, and the issuing of contracts to new employees.

According to "Human Resource Management" by Torrington, Hall & Taylor, a good system of record-keeping is vital for managers and their workplaces to ensure that they are ready to comply with new legal obligations, such as the National Minimum wage, and the Working Time Regulations. Many professional HR managers do not consider those issues as important, and instead try to search for more "glamorous" roles, such as formulating policies or strategies. They are also very important, but achieving success in delivering the abovementioned basic tasks is crucial to help HR function better in an organization, and to gain and maintain the credibility and respect that are necessary in order to influence other managers in the organization. (Mayhew 2015; Torrington, Hall & Taylor 2008)

### **3. FACE-TO-FACE INTERACTIONS**

After discussing the responsibilities and activities in Human Resource Management, it is time to concentrate on the important issue many prospective managers want to know, and that is what skills are required from a good HR manager, and how to use them.

The aim of this thesis is to give a general idea on the subject, and give some expectations, which a possible future Human Resource manager might have before deciding to follow this career. This chapter will give explanation on what kind of skills are expected in HR management, and how should they be applied to working situations.

Direct interaction with another person is probably one of the most fundamental parts of HR management. A manager has to deal with people on many occasions. Obviously conversations are vital in order to successfully deal with customers, workers or supervisors. That is why before deciding on becoming a Human Resource manager, one needs to know the basic skills that are necessary in order to be able to correctly solve any “people issues” that might appear on the way.

The way one person deals with the interaction between oneself and another human being is influenced by personality. The relation between those two people, respect towards each other, the atmosphere, and many other factors. That is why one should keep in mind that here the general idea of Face-to-face interactions is discussed, and even if one does not fill in the exact criteria, that does not mean being excluded from having a chance of succeeding as a Human Resource manager.

#### **3.1 Effectiveness in interaction**

Being good at interactions is the basic criterion for conducting a good interview. If one does not know how to freely talk with people, and how to use the conversation for one’s cause, then one might need to consider training oneself before getting into HR management.

It is necessary to understand the language behind direct interactions. Body and facial expressions are very important in this case. It is no mystery that a person who is blushing might be feeling embarrassed, or that having an angry expression and maybe even shaking is a definite sign of disturbance, anger, conflict and so on. It is quite helpful to know how to read those signs. This gives the manager an advantage in interactions, and might lead to successful negotiations, boost of morale, improving the quality of a worker's performance, not only during interviews, but in general working life.

It is important to understand that it is human nature to try and hide emotions, fears etc. many times by the use of lies as a weapon and shield. It is in fact a feature that we as humans cannot avoid. As H.G. Wells said more than a century ago:

*The social contract is... a vast conspiracy of human beings to lie and humbug themselves and one another for the general good. Lies are the mortar that bind the savage individual man into the social masonry.* (Torrington, Hall & Taylor 2008, 94)

One might ask "But how do I manage such moments, when I know a person is lying, and I cannot come off as rude and/or insensitive?" That is where *balance and poise* come in, as the first skill needed in successful interactions. If one focuses on what the current aim of this face-to-face encounter is, one will be able to stay more at ease with the whole situation, and feel more in control. As a manager, one will be calm enough to withstand various situations, since it is impossible to be prepared for everything. It is worth remembering that each human has their own, unique personality. Balanced and calm view on the surroundings and the situation can make conversations enjoyable, and give the opportunity to earn respect of one's employees, who can see their manager's self-confidence and already mentioned poise.

How to achieve such inner balance? First, it is connected to self-confidence. Confidence is a result of strong conscience, good self-esteem, and it might require work. It is hard to point out a definite way of achieving confidence, because it relies on each person's individual struggle in reaching such state of mind. Some people are even born with it. However, if you a guideline is needed, it is suggested to refer to books, ask advice from more than one source, and most importantly, try to view oneself from more than one's own perspective.

One other factor which might help feel self-confident is the feedback a person receives from social interactions. Positive responses to jokes, or other forms of how a certain part of a conversation goes, can lead to relaxing the tension of face-to-face interactions. Hence making the person more confident in his or her interactive skills. Another element of poise is knowing what one is talking about. If one is comfortable and familiar with the topic, more strength in one's statements will be presented, and it is easier to deal with any "social bumps" on the way. Additionally it makes the speaker less afraid of seeming naive and being apprehended by others. When people ask questions about things one feels strongly about, it is easier to deal with social anxiety, and a very nice discussion can be born from it, creating bond with the other person. (Torrington, Hall & Taylor 2008, 95)

Poise is often associated with maturity, since a person with a well-developed view of themselves, and little anxiety about other people's opinions is viewed as a strong character and somehow feels more of an adult than someone, who does not fit into such criteria. Meeting people from different backgrounds and expanding one's own world view is very helpful in easier getting to a point, where one as a person is seen as mature.

When it comes to poise, one should be cautious of overstepping the boundaries that keep him or her in the most-desired middle. It can happen that a new-found self-consciousness will lead to egocentrism. A good way of avoiding it is to be responsive to other people's needs and feelings. Understanding others is necessary for people to be re-assured that the person they are speaking with is in fact confident, and not self-centred. As a manager while dealing with people in direct interactions, one might look for signals that certain questions have been clearly understood. When it is the manager, who is asking a question, he or she needs to be sure that the other person is aware of his or her points, and if needed, elaborate. Responsiveness can also include rewarding, usually in form of warmth, sympathy and helpfulness. Rewards not only sustain and strengthen the relationship, but may also be held back as a means of trying to get the manager's own way.

While it is important to be a strong and balanced leader, one needs to be aware of not forgetting about the needs of others. A leader is a person, who acts for the wellness of the whole team, not just his own. If a manager expects to be respected, similar respect needs to be paid in exchange. Consider an example, an employee contacts the manager's office.

When someone does that, they expect help, not scolding. Just being in balance with oneself is not enough. One needs to be rational and fair towards his or her workers as well. Another important skill for an HR manager is the ability to show *compassion*. It is an ability to understand the feelings of another person and be able to see their perspective. Such skill usually develops over time and through constant interactions and observation of people. It is a very important ability, because every HR department should make sure their workers are not afraid to ask for help. Employees are all individuals and they cannot be treated in the same way every time. (Torrington, Hall & Taylor 2008, 95)

Additionally, *compassion* enables the manager to build trust with the people in his or her company. A leader who constantly sits in his or her office will not be taken seriously, as nobody will believe he or she knows how to deal with actual problems that are happening outside of that office. That is why if the manager is compassionate and hopefully interactive with the workers, it is a great way to boost confidence in the group, as well as gain trust of each individual worker. (Torrington, Hall & Taylor 2008, 95)

Another very important thing that will need to be learned quite quickly as an HR manager is to recognize the environment and the people around have their own *frame of reference* and *set of stereotypes*. Those things cannot be influenced, and it is a manager's job to be able to adjust to different opinions each worker might have.

According to [skillsyouneed.com](http://skillsyouneed.com), the frame of reference is a person's view on his or her surroundings. It is his or her perspective on life and events occurring around. Whether they deal with problems calmly and with distance, or they feel the need to immediately close the issue and move on is determined by how a person was raised, what conditions he or she spent their childhood in, and so on. Such different points of view can lead to major problems in terms of interactions, since they connect to differences in opinions and philosophies. That is why a manager needs to be vary of such issues, and try to solve possible conflicts preferably before they arise.

A similar situation occurs with stereotypes. They are general ideas a person has while thinking or talking about a specific topic. Stereotypes touch many different areas, such as culture, gender, sexual orientation, race, and many more. Stereotypes can lead to significant problems in a company, and if the manager wants to avoid a lawsuit on his or

her hands, it is advisable to make sure you teach your workers to be tolerant towards each other, and react swiftly and strongly towards any cases of racism, intolerance, xenophobia, and all the others. (skillsyouneed, 2015)

### **3.2 Different types of interactions**

During interviews interaction with the employees cannot be avoided. Depending on the type of an interview (see chapter 4) a different approach to an interaction will be needed, depending on the nature of what is wanted from the worker, and what does the manager want to achieve.

In terms of interactions in management (Torrington, Hall & Taylor 2008), they can be divided into four broad groups:

- Inquiry
- Exposition
- Joint problem solving
- Conflict resolution

*Inquiry* is that group of situations, where an HR specialist needs to find things out from another person. In short it is questioning. It can be in situations where one worker's conduct is in doubt, or when research for truth is in progress. In addition, inquiry is present when there is a need of health inspection, for example under a suspicion of an epidemic among employees, or if there is an unwanted leak of information to other sources. After all, companies like to keep their secrets sometimes. (Torrington, Hall & Taylor 2008, 96)

The main "weapon", so to say, in such case is the interview of an employee (see chapter 4). There the manager will try to find out facts, attitudes, feelings, levels of understanding or misunderstanding, etc. that the designated person has. From that further managerial decisions can be made, once the necessary data is obtained. Basically, main skills connected to inquiry are those related to questioning. (Torrington, Hall & Taylor 2008)

A few of those questioning skills include using open-ended questions, i.e. using such questions where the answers are not simply "yes" or "no". It helps finding out the true

facts, because it requires a person to think, and that can reveal stress, the lack of information and other issues usually observed when somebody lies. Another useful skill is considering the other person's perspective. There is a lot to learn from examination of someone else's way of thinking, and it can help solve a problem that one was questioning about.

One more important aspect of such an interview with a worker is clarification. If the manager repeats a question, or ask a similar one in a different way, for example asking a person what they were doing at a specific time of the day, and then asking them how their day went later, hidden truths can be revealed, or missing pieces of the puzzle can be found. Questioning is a very strong tool for an HR manager, and it is advisable to try to keep in mind that the more people trust, the more can be achieved. (managementhelp 2015)

*Exposition* is almost the opposite of inquiry. Instead of carrying out the search for truth, the HR person will instead focus on sending the information, for example during a disciplinary interview (see chapter 4.4). The point of such is to develop a desired level of knowledge and understanding in the employees mainly as a preventive measure. For example, when a group or workers is reminded about the safety measures before noticing that the group did not follow them. (Torrington, Hall & Taylor 2008, 97)

Although sometimes workers need to be confronted and questioned about their mistakes, or if the already mentioned clarification is needed to be used, in terms of exposition the manager should mainly focus on being clear with what he or she wants to teach another person. Proper articulation and the right tempo of speaking, as well as organization of one's materials and effective illustration, hopefully with a use of examples, should make the exposition easy to understand and adapt.

*Joint Problem Solving* is a different type of activity in interaction. It includes the development that is created, when two or more parties work together in, as the name suggests, solving a problem or trying to understand a certain situation. Such types of activities can be met quite early, most probably everyone had at least once in their lifetime worked in a group on a mutual project. A Human Resource specialist will possibly use this interaction during an appraisal interview (see chapter 4.2), or negotiations with other managers or representatives of different companies. (Torrington, Hall & Taylor 2008, 97)

If one already has worked on a group project before, then from experience it should be known that solving a problem is not just an exchange of answers between one another. It is a path which both parties choose in order to find the perfect solution. Usually it is a problem that cannot be solved individually without necessary research. However, in working life it will not always be possible to have the access to sources of information, or finding such might be too difficult at the moment.

The skills in joint problem solving involve some questioning and explanation, connected to getting and exchanging the information, with the addition of careful listening and feedback. Both are very necessary for correct flow of the information.

Lastly *conflict resolution* is similar to joint problem solving, if one would take the word “joint” away from it. That means that as in case of the joint problem solving it is assumed that both parties share trust and have a common goal and interest, in terms of conflict resolution that not necessarily applies. It begins without those things, and the parties are not likely to trust each other, when their interests are different, or unknown, hence the word “conflict”. (Torrington, Hall & Taylor 2008, 97)

Skills that can be useful, and should be considered in case of resolving a conflict are those of presentation and listening. Additionally there is a need to be more professional (assuming that in joint problem solving the atmosphere is more relaxed and informal), and the questioning and feedback skills need to be at their top in order to prevail with issues one might be struggling with.

### **3.3 Setting the tone**

Now that the skills used in interactions have been determined, it is time to emphasize more details on how to set a tone of what is about to follow in a conversation, encounter, etc. It is very important while preparing an interview to know how to do it properly, since depending on the nature of that interview a different setting is in place.



What is a setting? When talking with another person there is this special atmosphere around that specific conversation. For example if a person asks “How do you feel today?” the respondent might feel more cared for, and that helps relax and enhances the feeling of trust. On the other hand the same person might not listen to the respondent’s answer following that question, and this drives anger and can end the interaction on bad terms. Setting is basically controlling that atmosphere of the interaction. (Torrington, Hall & Taylor 2008)

As an HR specialist, learning how to set a tone in an interview can help to get along with employees, gain trust, boost their morale or get them to have a better opinion about their supervisor, when he or she lets them know that their problems are cared for and that every worker is important. However even if that is not the supervisor’s goal at the moment, setting a tone can also include simply explaining to a person, what is about to happen, or provide information for the context, which will help the interviewed person engage in the process constructively.

Many common features for setting the tone in interactions include speaking first in order to lead the interview the way the manager wants it to go. Smiling and looking relaxed and confident can help relieve the tension and relax the candidate for the interview. Adding brief exchanges to the conversation, for example questions about weather or travel problems can also contribute to relaxing the tension during the interaction. Finally it is important to give explanations about what are the ideas towards the manager’s expectations and future plans, and clarifying everything in order for the other person or group of people to surely understand all the statements. (ceswoodstock 2015; hrnasty 2015)

It is advisable to get to know those simple tools and it just might make it easier master the art of creating a nice atmosphere during conversations, and also leading the conversations in the right direction. It is useful in both private and corporate life.

### 3.4 Listening

Listening is a very important interactive skill. It lets the other person know that the one spoken to is interested in what they are saying, and their message is being heard properly, but if a reaction is not conveyed in a proper way, one might come off as uninterested in the whole conversation.

Different feelings can be expressed in somebody's tone of voice. If they speak monotonously they can signify that they are bored, and hence it might be wise to either keep the conversation short and to the point, try to liven things up, or simply cut the whole interaction short.

Depression is not always visible in a person's facial expressions, but slow speed and low pitch in their way of speaking can let you know that there is a problem they struggle with, and a good thing is to try and go from there. It already depends on the personality and life rules a person lives by, but as an HR manager the most recommended is to offer help and compassion.

Many other emotions can be read in another person's tone of voice. High voice and emphasis are signs of enthusiasm, loud voice can signify anger, and abrupt speech defensiveness. It is recommended to use the knowledge of those simple things to one's advantage. According to Susan Elliot in "10 Suggestions to Skilful Listening", during interactions with either the employees or the bosses, it is always important to make sure they know that respectable attention is being paid to them. Inclining the body towards another person is a signal of attentiveness. Eye contact is a vital sign of a good listener, but it can be tricky. There is a difference between focusing one's eyes, and staring, so it is important to pay attention to own eye movement. (Torrington, Hall & Taylor 2008)

As written in "Human Resource Management" by Torrington, Hall & Taylor, there are also subconscious physical responses in our attentiveness. One should avoid doing anything that can show lack attention, for example playing with own car keys, or fiddling with a pencil. A skilled listener suppresses these actions, and also develops small gestures that are directly responsive to what the other person is saying, such as facial expressions as a reaction to the already mentioned tone of voice.

As a listener a person also has the opportunity to observe the other people's gestures, reactions, and way of conveying a message. Listening in silence additionally helps to fully understand the message which is being heard, and think about the information conveyed.

As Susan Elliot wrote:

*When we interrupt, the unwitting message we send to the speaker is: "What I have to say is more important than what you have to say." By learning to hold our tongue and become genuinely curious about what others are saying, we greatly improve our listening skills. (Elliot 3.08.2011)*

However, as far as silence is a sign of attentiveness, too much silence makes it difficult to stay focused on the topic and may even distract the person who is talking. (Elliot 3.08.2011; Torrington D., Hall L. & Taylor S. 2008)

### **3.5 Feedback**

As much as listening is important, there is also a need to provide the other person with feedback. It is a sign that the recipient has paid attention, and understood what he or she is being told. Showing interest in what the person is saying grants positive reaction from them, makes the atmosphere better, and gives respect.

The listener needs to reflect on what the other person is saying and how is it being said. That way he or she can sense the emotional bubble surrounding the conversation, and adjust his or hers reactions toward that. Reflection is usually the part where evaluating the situation is not requested, but analyzed instead. As an interviewer there is no expression of approval or lack thereof. Sympathy and condemnation are usually absent.

After the analysis, there is a further step, i.e. summarization and re-run of the information. That way the listener can clarify to oneself and the other person what has been said, and let them know he or she listened. Also it is a good way to point out any missing information, or errors in what has been understood. In exchange much of the information can be obtained from the respondent, and the necessary one can be selected. It is a skill used in any type of an interview (see chapter 4).

However, if a person feels like he or she does not need to go through the whole story once more, paraphrasing helps to take out the essence of what the conversation was about. For example, if a manager was interviewing an employee, and he or she talks about safety concerns, the paraphrasing would be something like “So basically you are telling me that we need updated safety regulations”. This way the employee can correct the manager or add something more.

To sum up, all of the skills mentioned in Chapter 3 are recommended (see Reference section of the thesis). A good manager takes into consideration learning those and improving the general performance. If he or she is not yet a manager while reading this, it is advisable to analyse one’s strengths and weaknesses, while thinking of those skills. However, those are only suggestions, and it does not mean that anybody with proper ambition cannot become a successful manager without having few of those abilities.

## **4. INTERVIEWS**

It is time to discuss the interviews themselves. The basics of what kind of skills are required from an HR manager have already been presented, together with how to lead conversations the proper way. This chapter will provide information gathered on the subject of what types of interviews there are, how they work and what are their purposes.

### **4.1 Selection interviewing**

Selection interviewing is something every manager encounters often, especially in Human Resources, where it is up to the manager to hire the best candidates for the specific job (as mentioned in chapter 2.1). In order to do that he or she will need to apply the already mentioned skills, and conduct an interview, unless the company or organization the manager works for has the policy of not using interviews as a method of finding new employees. What selection interview basically means is creating a controlled conversation with a purpose. Some of such purposes are:

- Collecting information which helps predict how well the applicants would perform in the job. That is why every time a person applies to a workplace he or she needs to prepare either a CV or Resume
- Providing candidates with full details of the job
- Conducting the interview in a way that lets the candidate know they have been treated fairly and equally

The interview is a great way of exchanging information, as both sides are practically required to share it to some extent. Moreover the range of topics is very broad. As an employer it gives one an opportunity to sell the company and explain details of a job in depth. The interviewer can assure the applicant that he or she wants to work for the company. At the same time candidates can ask questions and stabilize their opinion about the workplace and the work itself. Additionally together with the candidate it is possible to analyse the provided information (CV, Resume, etc.) and discuss it. (University of Leicester 2015)

### 4.1.1 Strategies

There is a number of different strategies one can follow in order to prepare and conduct your interview.

Being *friendly and straightforward*, according to Orioninternational.com also called the *Round-Robin Interview*, is the most commonly used strategy by far, since it helps ease the situation at the very beginning and makes the candidate more trusting. If an interviewee is relaxed, he or she is more likely to be forthcoming in the information that he or she is offering. This can help speed up the interview, thus the efficiency of the process is higher. Additionally the manager is able to leave the applicant with a good impression about the position he or she applied for, and in case the manager chooses that person, there is a higher chance that they will see each other at work. (Orioninternational 2015; changingminds 2015)

Another way managers conduct their interviews is to put the candidate in a *problem-solving*, or *situational* position. That means making the person imagine that they are already doing the job, and confront them with an imaginary problem. Depending on what kind of a solution they come up with the manager can come to conclusions about the applicant's elementary knowledge and also how they handle a stressful situation, since such an interview is not as relaxing as the first type. However, this kind of interview helps the manager learn about the applicant's knowledge only. Understanding and skills cannot be so-well tested in theory. (Orioninternational 2015; changingminds 2015)

Another strategy to use is similar to the problem-solving one. It focuses on the *candidate's work record and history*, considering that he or she has any. Basically it is required that the candidate describes the background to a chosen situation, and then is asked questions about what he or she would do in that case. This helps the manager establish what to expect of such person in a workplace and with good questions and analysing skills is an excellent method of finding the best workers. (Orioninternational 2015; changingminds 2015)

Finally, there is the *stress strategy*. It is basically the opposite of the first strategy mentioned. In this case the interviewer is aggressive and puts the candidates in a defensive position. It helps find the strengths of the candidate and evaluate how he or she behaves in

a stressful environment. However, such atmosphere can also make it difficult to evaluate the usual behaviour of the applicant, and it leaves them with bad feelings after the interview is done. (Orioninternational 2015; changingminds 2015)

#### **4.1.2 Sequences of a selection interview**

*Preparation* is the first part in the sequence of an interview. This is the part that happens after making the requirements for a job, creating the description and sending notifications to newspapers, websites etc. about looking for employees. The interviewer already went through recruitment, short listing etc. and now it is time to invite possible candidates for the interview.

The first step in preparation is introduction. Stating the interviewer's name, position and whatever other information the interviewer wants to provide the interviewee with. Additionally this is the time to collect all the data, meaning curricula vitae of the candidates, specifications of the person, and other statements of competencies.

According to "Human Resource Management" by Torrington, Hall & Taylor, in case there are multiple people to be interviewed, a timetable is recommended, and it needs to be focused on more than usual. After all, the manager does not want the applicants to feel like they are treated unfairly, or it is unwelcome if another person enters while the previous interview has not been finished yet. The time required for each interview is the interviewer's decision, so planning according to that should not be too difficult. However the plan has to be treated with care. Many interviewers assume that their candidates have all the time they need to wait. Such an assumption is wrong. Most of the times people wait for more than one interview, and have other places to attend, even if not related to work. Making them wait creates frustration, and can lead to unhappy atmosphere during the interview, or other consequences, such as the interviewee choosing a different company, because he or she felt like that the company did not care enough.

How to deal with such issues? It has been proven satisfying for companies to create a timetable which includes breaks after each candidate. In such a way even if one needs to clarify more things with the interviewee, there is extra time provided by the break. If no

more information is needed, there is still some time before the next applicant is supposed to arrive. (Torrington, Hall & Taylor 2008)

The next part of the interview is *reception*. It is possible to imagine that when a person enters the building of a company, the HR specialist will not be the first one who that person meets. Usually while entering, a candidate for the interview will meet at least two people. One of them is the receptionist, who greets the newcomer and informs the interviewer about the arrival of the candidate. The other person they meet is an emissary from HR department, whose responsibility will be to bring the applicant to the interview.

Both of those people can provide information, which is why their presence is very valuable. They can give different impression of the place compared to the interviewer, who is going to be viewed as the candidate's superior. In addition, they can influence the candidate's impression of that superior. It is important to remember that the interviewer most probably will know much more about the person that he or she is going to meet, than that person knows about the interviewer.

It is a very nice touch to conduct the introduction to the interviewee already in the waiting room. It creates a warmer atmosphere, and relaxes both the interviewer and the candidate.

Finally, there is the *setting of the interview* (see chapter 3.3 for additional information about skills related to that). As the name suggest, it relates to what kind of environment is provided for the interview itself.

Considering that each interview is individual, meaning there is going to be only one applicant in the room at a time, there are some easy suggestions on how to make a good setting for an interview. For instance, if the interview is happening across a desk, the interviewer can try to make it seems less of a barrier. The desk should be clean, and one should use body language, lean a little, etc. Since it is a private conversation, one should make sure that the room is suitable, not a large hall with a minimum of fifty chairs, where only the interviewer and the applicant would sit. The situation can be even worse, if there are more HR specialists than just the interviewer, while there is only one candidate. It is very important to avoid having interruptions from other visitors or phone calls during an interview. It creates the look of being unprofessional and rude. Finally, a simple but



important issue, one should make sure the candidate knows where to sit. (National University of Ireland 2006; Torrington, Hall & Taylor 2008)

#### **4.1.3 Structure of the selection interview**

There are many different descriptions of the structure of an interview. However most of them agree that main three points can be distinguished:

During *introduction* the aim is to ease the situation. By making a few minutes of small talk with the candidate the manager can relax him or her and oneself as well. An obvious part is exchanging small information, name and so on, so that the interviewer will not feel like a complete stranger to the interviewee. This part should be treated as a warm-up for the rest. It is possible to talk about such topics as the weather, transportation difficulties or describe how the interview is going to go. (Kessler 2010)

The next is *information exchange*. Here one will ask questions already related to the purpose of the interview. The manager will try to gather information about the candidate, so that he has something to compare to all the others, and from that will be able to choose a future employee (questioning skills were discussed in chapter 3). Additionally it is possible to spend some time describing opportunities or plans for the future, and direct the conversation this way. It helps get to know the candidate's knowledge on the subject, and get some good reaction on what kind of decisions he or she would make. It is advisable to not forget to listen to the candidate as well. It is also very important to show respect in this process. The interviewer cannot make the candidate feel mixed together with all the other applicants. Apart from listening one can also let the candidate ask some questions. It can be really helpful to already establish a small employer-worker bond, and helps in the future. After that the interview has to be summarized. (Kessler 2010; Fortress 2015)

*Wrap-up*. It is that time when the interviewer says "Do you have any more questions?" The interviewer will give the interviewee an opportunity to get some information he or she might need while making the decision later. In addition, it is a good time to describe what the future processes of the employee selection will be. It is important not to forget the pleasantries and tell the applicant how it is nice of them to appear, compliment their good

behaviour during the interview and so on. After that it is possible to take a break and wait for the next candidate. (Fortress 2015; Kessler 20.05.2010)

## 4.2 Appraisal interviewing

Selection interview is not the only activity observed in Human Resources Management. A major part of it is managing performance of the workers, and from there we can distinguish this specific type of interview, the appraisal.

The point of this is for the manager to review his or her notes concerning the performance of an individual or a group of workers. Thanks to that it is possible to create a career plan, improve the morale of the team, and evaluate the employee. Moreover, it gives possibilities to include new challenges for successful workers, hence improving the overall performance.

Individuals can be appraised by either a member of HR department, their immediate supervisors, their co-workers, or even themselves. If the person doing the appraisal happens to be the manager, however, special care is needed, because many issues can cloud the superior's judgment, and unfair appraisal leads to discord in the team. Some of such issues are:

- Prejudice – if the appraiser is afraid of being called prejudiced, or is prejudiced himself, the appraisal can be insincere or distorted
- The problem of context – it occurs when the appraiser does not distinguish the work of a person from the context of the work (for example when a leader of a group gets praised for the work of the whole team)
- The 'halo effect' – is the name of a situation, when someone gets to be appraised just because their nature is very 'likeable'
- The paperwork – documentation can make it difficult to ensure consistent reporting, and hence it is hard to either choose what and whom to appraise, but also from the point of view of the workers it is difficult to expect an appraisal
- Problems with insufficient knowledge – many times it can happen that workers get praised simply because of their high status in hierarchy, rather than their achievements

- Formality – This one is for both the interviewer and interviewee, because they can easily forget that even though the point is the appraisal, it is still a formal interview (Torrington, Hall & Taylor 2008, 361)

Sometimes however, even if the interview is successful, the appraisal scheme itself can fail. That can be caused by multiple factors, for example if employees ignore the outcomes. It should seem obvious that follow-up actions should be taken after an appraisal. It can happen that the praised person gets too full of himself or herself, and does not actually improve, because of this thought that since he or she was praised, it must mean the current state is enough. (Torrington, Hall & Taylor 2008, 362)

Another common issue on the side of the appraisers can be praising the wrong features in workers. Some people get to hear compliments from their supervisors for behaviour other than real work, for example time-keeping, or being pleasant, because those things are more visible. However, they are not just strictly related to work, and from the manager's point of view they do not deserve an appraisal. Moreover once the manager does praise the co-workers, it is important to remember not to put them "just above average". Some managers try to give a compliment towards a worker's performance by stating, that he or she is doing at least as well as the others. If the other person does not get insulted by this, it is still quite an unappreciative way of praising one's work. (Torrington, Hall & Taylor 2008, 362)

In order to avoid those problems, it is always good to prepare the appraisal interview. From the start a manager should brief the person he or she wants to give praise on what form the interview will have. Some managers even use self-evaluation forms beforehand. It makes the opening for the eventual interview easier.

The appraiser will have to be sure of the designated person's performance. Checking reports, past records or other available documents and materials connected to the specific period before making a decision on any compliments towards the work of that person is very valuable. Most important is focusing on the past appraisals and their outcomes.

Preparing the appraisal interview is very similar to the selection interview, especially the setting part. Putting effort and time in creating a well-supporting setting and nature of the

discussion has proven to get extremely positive response from people getting appraisal from their superiors.

#### **4.2.1 Structure of the appraisal interview**

An appraisal interview is quite similar to the selection interview, there has to be a beginning, middle and an ending. However it shifts its focus on different aspects of work, while evaluating the history of performance and discussing the future possibilities. It is quite helpful to think of the appraisal as a meeting more than an interview, because in an interview the system is straightforwardly questions and answers, but during appraisals both sides discuss the mutual topic. (shell-livewire 2015)

The main conclusion to be reached in an appraisal interview is to create a “performance step”. This “step” is what both parties have come up with in order to improve the general performance of either an individual or a group. It also involves identifying the key ways in which to make that performance better. (shell-livewire 2015)

The first part of the appraisal interview is *going through the past performance steps*, and reviewing them. Many times appraisal processes are focused on that. It helps deal with potential failure in performance and the nature of relationship between the appraiser and the person getting the praise. However, checking the past performance steps is only helpful in finding failures, and it barely concentrates on the future or the good aspects of a worker’s job. A manager should concentrate on the employee’s average success rate and performance during the specific period. While checking the previous performance steps it is important to ask the worker what went right going into what went wrong. Moreover while talking about the failures in fulfilling the previous steps, it is advisable to listen most of the time, and apply probing questions to further the details.

According to an article on how to conduct an appraisal interview from the website shell-livewire.com, after going through the past performance steps, the next part of appraisal is to *set new performance steps*. It is divided into two processes:

The first part of this is gathering the necessary information about the person. One will need to know what his or her employee’s capabilities are, and how much that employee is

able to actually do, also including the ability to improve. In practice it means that the appraiser will need to actively listen to the person, trying to focus on the wider picture than just actions. Finding out that person's relationship with other workers, as well as the point of view on his or her job, career aspirations and others, might prove to be very useful for a manager. That way the manager will be able to create a general picture concerning the worker's needs, goals and potential. (shell-livewire 2015)

It is important to know how to manage this conversation with the employee. The appraiser will need to keep a good relationship with other person. It is advisable to discuss problems as a mutual issue, for example "this period *we* are going to deal with...", or something similar. Thanks to this the interviewer will avoid the appraisal seeming too "compulsory", as if it was something "done" to the worker. However, that applies only to cases when the relation with the employee is already on a good level. If for the whole year a manager has been telling someone "*You* have done this" and "*You* have not fulfilled the requirement for this", then the manager can hardly expect a positive reaction when he or she suddenly changes the conversation into "*We* are...". A poor relation with workers is something a Human Resource Specialist needs to deal with outside of the appraisal. (Jacksonville University 2010, 3)

The final part of this first process is to ask for honest feedback. The performance and performance steps that have been discussed influence the relationship with a specific worker or group of workers, and feedback about concrete managerial actions is very helpful in many areas.

The next step is *dealing with the performance* itself. That means that during the appraisal interview there is a need to talk about issues such as responsibilities, accountability or performance rather than separate actions of their own. To make the appraisal effective, as a manager one needs to set objectives, goals and results. Giving the workers only methods is insufficient. (shell-livewire 2015)

While working on the performance step, it is important to know boundaries. The steps need to be realistic and possible to achieve in order to actually create some results. It is better to agree on a few small things that can be improved than making an extensive plan on how to become number one in everything. Moreover, recording the performance steps

is very recommended, as it helps the manager follow everything through. It is important to remember that setting the objectives is not enough, mutual work is necessary to make the performance step work.

Finally, the last thing to do on the appraisal interview is to *sum up what has been discussed, and make sure that the employee understood the manager's point of view*, and know what he or she got praised for as well as what is expected of him or her to be done in the future. It may seem a very simple task, but it actually requires the interviewer to listen carefully and be aware of details that might have been overlooked. In this case being rude while correcting the employee is not a concern, after all it is the manager's duty to help.

If the summary conversation is not going too well, one can help by going through the steps oneself, and lead the discussion in an own way. Appraisal is a mutual agreement of both parties, and making sure that everything is understood is crucial to that. (smallbusiness 2015; shell-livewire 2015; Jacksonville University 2010, 3-4)

### **4.3 Coaching**

The term “coaching” is defined as the process in which the supervisor is going to share his or her expertise with the employees. It is also possible to hire a professional in case the supervisor's knowledge on the subject is not good enough. The point of that is to improve specific skills in the right way, and push the productivity of a company forward.

Sometimes the terms coaching and mentoring are mixed. However there are a few differences between the two. First of all, coaching is the one that connects to being a supervisor. It is a practical training of a specific skill, and as the coach an HR specialist advises the person on how to perform the desired task. As for mentoring, it is done usually by people, who are not immediate supervisors of a worker. It connects more to the relationship between the worker and mentor, and it helps develop the less-experienced person's knowledge and career progression. In brief, mentoring is about the general performance, while coaching focuses on the productivity and skills. (hrinz 2015)

Coaching has many benefits. The most important one is that a person will be more effective in their field of work thanks to one-on-one training with a coach. That improves his or her work performance and gives better skill set for the future.

However, in order to be successful in coaching, it is necessary to understand the process of learning itself. There are different types of learning and each of them require a different approach and methods. As it has already been explained, coaching is about teaching the workers to do something, which is much different from getting them to understand something on the intellectual level. That is why knowing how people learn is very important. (hr.ubc 2015)

#### **4.3.1 Different methods and approaches to learning**

The first one to be discussed is *comprehension*. This learning type occurs when a person learns how, why and when certain things happen. It is basically the biggest problem for people, who tend to only memorise their theory. Good understanding of the topic proves to be more useful, and stays in one's mind much easier as opposed to memorization. For example while learning a different language, comprehending the structure of that language and basics is very useful in further learning. It can also easily apply to working life, such as understanding the standard procedures, or understanding the law of employment in order to be able to determine if a worker has been mistreated or not. (Torrington, Hall & Taylor 2008)

The next approach is *reflex learning*. Basically it is a different way of calling the process of learning through practice. Usually what it involves is physical movement as well as knowing what to do. Reflex learners thrive thanks to constant repetition, which helps them learn the methods of doing the task with speed and efficiency. Production line workers usually learn their jobs in that way, and as it can be seen they are fast and basically do not even need to think about what they are doing. (Torrington, Hall & Taylor 2008)

*Attitude development* is a little more difficult type of learning. What it basically means is that the point of attitude development is to create a certain capacity to adjust a person's point of view, while at the same time keeping them confident in their skills and behaviour. Most of that kind of learning is connected to customer service, where workers need to

adapt in order to be able to deal with all different types of customers they are going to face. Giving the workers a chance to develop positive attitudes about themselves can make them effectively cope with other people in many different situations. (Torrington, Hall & Taylor 2008)

As already mentioned in the reflex learning part, there is a type of learning based on *memory training*. It gives the workers tools to handle many different situations during work, and sometimes it is the only way of learning. A good example of that is medicine. Pharmacists, doctors, nurses and other people connected to medicine need to memorize large amount of information in order to be able to successfully help their patients. Memorization can be difficult, but it is essential in many businesses, whether one needs to deal with lots of information, or numbers, or simply remember who is responsible for what in a company. Memory training is the only way in cases, where there is a need to know things, without necessarily understanding them. (Torrington, Hall & Taylor 2008; hrwhale 2015)

The final learning approach is *procedural learning*. It is similar to memory training with the difference that certain protocol does not need to be remembered, but instead it has to be understood and located. This refers to the type of learning procedures such as shutting off all the lights at the end of a work day, or dealing with a safety drill. (Torrington, Hall & Taylor 2008; hrwhale 2015)

Most of the times as a coach one will be using his or her knowledge about multiple types of learning in order to teach the workers. For example, a production manager needs to memorize the large amount of numbers, but at the same time should have at least a little practical experience with using the machinery, and needs to understand what processes are involved.

Additionally, when it comes to coaching one needs to know what the level of experience and knowledge is in the people he or she wants to train. People who do not have any of these are on the *novice* level, and they do not have any say in how the things are working in a company. After they learn enough, the next step is to become an *advanced beginner*, where they implement the knowledge and start gaining experience. In addition, understanding of rules and procedures is part of this. When they get enough experience,



workers can be considered *competent* to do their own work already, and they can fully concentrate on their career. Once they start using their intuition thanks to enough expertise in the area of interest, they are *proficient*. The final step after proficiency is to become an *expert*. (hrwhale 2015)

Depending on what is the level of an employee, different approach to coaching is required, because the higher the expertise of a worker, the more important it is to be sure a coach has more knowledge and experience than them. (hrwhale 2015; Torrington, Hall & Taylor 2008, 414, 466-467)

The reason why coaching is mentioned in this thesis is that as a HR specialist one might be required to hire a coach for his or her employees. That requires skills involved in selection interview, but additionally it is needed to know the qualities of a good coach.

#### **4.3.2 The characteristics of a good coach**

It does not matter if a manager is planning to coach his or her team, or if he or she wants to hire a different professional. Knowing what makes for a good trainer is essential when thinking of coaching.

First on the list of necessary qualities is *trust*. Since coaching is most of the time a one-on-one activity, it can lead to some private aspects of someone's life. In order to avoid any problems, it is necessary to be able to raise the level of trust on the person trained. Trust is also vital in order to have normal relation between the coach and employee. They might argue, or become close friends, but such chemistry is necessary in order to provide a good learning environment. Many workers are going to be highly skilled in performing, but they will have little knowledge on what exactly is the higher purpose of their work, and how it affects the general well being of a company. However it is because of their performance that they might get overconfident and develop a so-called career anchor – something they rely on to keep the job stable. A coach might need to challenge them and make this anchor disappear at first, and it is highly unlikely to do unless an employee has absolute belief in his or her coach's trustworthiness.

With trust comes *respect*. A coach not only can require respect from his or her trainee, but mutual respect is necessary to make the process work. In order to achieve mutual respect, the learner has to be sure that his or her coach is worth of being respected. There can be many different reasons for respecting someone, for example the already mentioned trustworthiness, experience, proficiency or performance record (chapter 3.1 and 4.1). Those things need to be on a high enough level in order to invoke respect from the other person. That respect needs to be equal, without patronising behaviour from the coach or condescending. A learner needs to be respected for their skill and accomplishments, as well as their will to improve.

And while discussing the learner's accomplishments and experience, it is important that the assigned coach also has *job expertise*. In order to teach, one needs to know how. Moreover, the coach needs to know at least as good, though preferably better than the designated learner, how to do the job. Otherwise there is no extra knowledge to be shared, and such a coach can hardly be taken seriously.

In the face-to-face interactions section (chapter 3) this important skill that applies also to coaching has already been mentioned. That is *listening* (chapter 3.4). Coaches need to be very sensitive and conscientious listeners, because the coaching relationship is quite close to performance appraisal. A coach needs to know how the worker has been doing his or her job by the time, and what the point of view on the whole process was, as well as attitude. Only then it is possible to focus on which aspects of the learner's performance or knowledge can be improved, and the coaching plan can be built. Asking the right questions can reveal many interesting details, and sometimes it helps the workers make the correct conclusions on their own, which additionally improves their relationship with their coach, and gives a mood boost.

After listening, a coach should be able to draw conclusions considering the worker's level of expertise and performance. *Evaluating* is important for a good trainer to get the necessary data on his or her learner, and assess it effectively thanks to having a different approach and perspective than the employee.

A good coach also needs to be challenging. Even though listening should help the workers get to correct solutions and help with the career block, without a challenge they cannot

improve. That is after all why a manager has hired the coach in the first place. While interviewing a possible trainer, one should be sure that he or she has the ability to confront the learner, and give a different opinion or interpretation about what the problem is or was. Challenging is an important tool for coaches, since it not only opens a path for improvement, but also teaches the learner the importance of criticism and how to deal with it.

Finally, all of those characteristics would be nothing, if the coach would not include *practical help* into his or her work. Part of the teaching process is to provide useful suggestions like “Have you tried...” or “Did you think of...” which can easily help eradicate that performance block, and clear the mind. However, this cannot be overused, since it can make the learner dependent on their coach, and stop thinking creatively about his job.

It is very nice for companies to think that their manager possesses all of those qualities mentioned above, but the truth is, not many of them do, or at least they do not possess all of those qualities. That is why it is quite a good choice to hire the coach from outside the company, who not only focused his or her career on developing those necessary characteristics and skills, but can also provide a different perspective on how the work in the company is done. Even if a manager is not the target for training of the particular coach, simply talking and sharing experiences can broaden the views of both the coach and the manager, and in the best case scenario it would improve their work performance. What we can learn from coaches is that it is useful for managers to be able to identify the needs of workers to improve their skills or performance, after which gathering information and motivating the workers is recommended. The next step would be planning on how to achieve success in the skill/performance improvement, and create opportunities to fulfil that plan. After that observing, giving feedback and supporting are vital tools for a good manager.

If a manager is hiring a professional to teach his or her workers, it is important to concentrate on those aspects of a good coach while interviewing the possible candidates. Listening and feedback skills help interviewers to get to know all the information they need from the interviewee. If interviews are done successfully, making the right choice of who should coach the employees should not be hard. (Quinn 04.12.2014; Cole 2014)

#### **4.4 Disciplinary and Grievance interviews**

The last part of this chapter is the final type of interview a Human Resource Specialist will have to deal with. That is discipline and grievance.

Discipline is the final tool for managers to be able to control as well as improve the situation at work, through concentrating on the misconduct and trying to mutually find a solution to the problem. Unfortunately, according to the referred article on careerride.com there is confusion about what the disciplinary interview is actually supposed to be. Many people believe that it is just a way of punishing workers for their errors and is seen as unfair because it gives the association with being fired or dismissed, and a large number of specialists actually use it that way. However it is more than that. Discipline is supposed to change the behaviour of a worker either during his or her performance, or towards it. Such changes not necessarily include a punishment, unless of course the manager considers criticism as such.

Grievance and disciplinary interviews can be connected to both the management and employee side. If a worker is dissatisfied with his or her working conditions, he can form and send a complaint, from which an interview can be created. If a manager is displeased with how his employees perform, he or she also can express a need for disciplinary action, and again, the interview can be organized.

Some grievance or disciplinary interviews are very easy to conduct. The manager receives or expresses a complaint, gives information, explains necessary changes or demands in work, and delivers the criticism. However, in some cases a further investigation is required. For example, if a worker is suddenly not as efficient as before, and nobody really knows why, the manager will need to interview that worker and perhaps his or her coworkers in order to find the cause of the problem and try to solve it. Such actions require skilful empathy and perception, as well as sympathy and poise (see chapter 3). Most importantly however, they need time. It is important to remember, that managers are dealing with human psyche here, and they should be careful not to overstep boundaries one might not be aware of.

A good tool for improving or solving the problem a manager might have with his or her employees, is to use self-discipline during the interview. Asking a worker the right questions and requesting his or her opinions on the subject can bring interesting points of views and reveal the cause of a problem, without even mentioning it. It is also possible to demand workers to discipline other workers, which can reduce the need to supervise a group, and develop good leadership skills in the elected candidate, but that can make his or her group members dislike the person. (Torrington, Hall & Taylor 2008, 616; careerride 2015)

#### **4.4.1 Preparing for grievance and disciplinary interviews**

Since grievance and discipline are such delicate types of interview, they need a good time spent on preparation. The first thing that needs focus is checking the procedures and making sure that the interview will be appropriate. What is meant by that is a manager will need to be sure what are his or her reasons for the interview, what kind of disciplinary actions he or she is willing to take and if the person that is going to be interviewed is correct for it. The same goes for a grievance situation, when the employee has to be certain if he or she is not taking the matters to the wrong person, or if his or her points are valid. Another thing to look out for is the superior's own reputation as the HR specialist. Many managers know what the issue is and maybe even have a solution for it, but they stay quiet because they do not want their workers to dislike them for a disciplinary meeting. It is recommended to keep in mind that the main point is to improve the situation of a company, and if one is good with his or her own interpersonal skills, the conflict with workers can be avoided, and at the same time the issue at work resolved.

The next issue of the preparation for a disciplinary/grievance interview is to decide, who is going to be there. It is quite procedural that there is an employee representative. After all a manager cannot just invite the whole group to his or her office, it would not convey the message properly. However, that is just a procedure. It is valuable to consider inviting more than one employee, so that to avoid stress in one person, because such stress can prevent achievement of a good solution to a problem, and makes the employee feel insecure. Making the manager accompany the designated employee is a mistake, because that accelerates the stress even more. It is advisable to create a calm atmosphere, where the employees can discuss the problem with the manager freely.

The next step is finding information on the subject (see questioning skills in chapter 3). For a disciplinary interview it is good to acquaint oneself with who is the interviewee, and have evidence for a disciplinary cause. The aspects of the working performance and efficiency are part of that evidence. However care is required, because in many cases information can be existing only because of difference in opinions or prejudices of managers, that is why data needs to be legit.

In case of a grievance interview it will be necessary to have information on the subject of the mentioned grievance and the root causes of the problem. This kind of information tends to be filtered through the chain of managers who convey the message from one to another until it finally reaches the specific superior. One needs to carefully consider the information he or she is given and preferably find additional background to this information.

For both types of the interview a manager will need more general information than that connected only to grievance or discipline. The manager will need knowledge in order to understand the general arrangements and relationships at work, as well as the details on the workers concerned, their length of service, training, skill level, experience, and so on.

It is quite beneficial to ask for advice before starting the interview. Other managers or workers can give objective and unprejudiced feedback on the procedures at work, and what the cause of the issue could be. In addition managers can have certain ideas of what could be done in terms of solving the problem, for example giving additional training, getting assistance with a problem or transferring the worker. A manager needs to verify how practical are the actions he or she is going to take before confronting the employee.

Finally, an HR specialist needs to prepare the place for conveying the interview. It might seem simple, but there are cases when the parties arrive at different locations, or at different times. In addition, choosing an informal situation or location can be advantageous. Discussing the issue in a restaurant instead of the manager's own office can be a more appropriate setting for approaching grievance and disciplinary issue. However, at the same time those would be too informal if the matter has reached the formal level, where an official setting is recommended. It is best to have the formal part at the end of the

procedure of disciplinary interview, because giving a warning or penalty to a worker can hardly be taken seriously if it is discussed over a drink in a pub. (adviceguide 2015; Mayhew 2015)

#### **4.4.2 Grievance interview structure**

The first step in a grievance interview is connected to the preparation part. That is the manager needs to get to know what the grievance is about, confirm its subject and who this grievance is coming from. Then a manager has to confirm it with the employee in order to be sure the information is valid. This part is highly important, because managers tend to have different points of view on the issue, and not necessarily can see the importance behind it. That is why getting acquainted with the worker's thoughts on the subject is very crucial and helps throughout the interview to solve the issue, or at least calm the employees down.

Once a manager has obtained the necessary info, it is time to invite the employee or a group to state the case and explain the root causes of the problem as well as the nature of the whole issue. They will tell the interviewer where the dissatisfaction came from and maybe even come up with ready ideas on what in their opinion could be the solution. According to an article on the website carrerride.com (see list of references), being able to express the aggravation is already the first step towards calming the situation down, and if workers feel that they can freely express themselves it gives benefits outside of the interview itself. However, it is important to pay attention to the details (check listening in chapter 3.3). It is very difficult to provide the necessary information without good presentation skills, and in many cases the employees will not possess such. Thus a manager needs to be sure to ask questions in order to make the whole information flow stable and to get as much knowledge on the subject as is needed in order to be able to help. Of course such questions need to come after the workers have presented their case, because interrupting an already aggrieved employee can cause even further disturbance and give the manager worse feedback. Listening and giving reflections are necessary skills to be used here. (Torrington, Hall & Taylor 2008, 620)

After the interviewer has created a clear image of the problem what is and what caused it, it is good to go through the most important parts once more. It gives a chance for the

employee to add more details that might have been overlooked in the first time. The manager will give a message that he or she understood the issue and listened to the grievance.

Now the employee point of view has been understood, which means the next step to be taken is to show the position on the problem from the manager's point of view. It can mean that the manager will have to explain the company policy, rules, and safety precautions. He or she can compare the grievance to previous cases, or explain the problem from the point of view of a supervisor. Basically one needs to give the employee a clarification about why the management position has been the way it was before the grievance interview took place. The employee might not accept the manager's justifications, but it is important that they are understood. Just as it was important for the manager to understand the employee point of view.

Since both parties are now in understanding, the next step is trying to find a common ground, and work one's way through it. During this phase of the interview a manager might find what he or she and the employee agree on, and on what do they disagree. After that it is possible to analyze the details and find what caused the disagreement.

When doing that, the focus of the conversation will shift towards the disagreement. However, as opposed to when the manager started the interview, the employee now understands the management's position and can see the problem more clearly than before. With that in mind, it is advisable to pay attention to the employee's suggestions, and carefully listen to the feedback received, while the manager's points are presented. It can even happen that once both sides of the problem have been reviewed, no actions will need to be taken, because the whole grievance will lose its meaning, for example if during the interview the manager will decide that the grievance is unfounded or mischievous. However in most cases both sides will give their ideas on alternatives and modifications, which leads to the final step, finding the good and bad in those suggestions.

The final step is to consider the alternatives, their advantages and disadvantages. However it is good to point out that a grievance interview is not a negotiation. The final decision belongs to the manager. It is useful to guide one's decisions by feedback received from the employee, while paying attention to the fact that not all the changes that make the company



better are satisfactory to the workers. However once the manager has considered all the pros and cons, it is recommended to give the employee an explanation on why the specific decision has been made, and if there are any, give advice on how to avoid the problem in the future. The employee might ask questions or even object to the statement, but ultimately the decision is the manager's, and it has to be accepted. Good poise is helpful in that (see chapter 3). (University of Oxford 2015; Torrington, Hall & Taylor 2008, 620; careerride 2015)

#### **4.4.3 Disciplinary interview structure**

Since disciplinary actions are taken because of a dissatisfaction from the managers, the first action to be taken is to inform the workers why such dissatisfaction exists, focusing on the facts of why there is a problem, not the feelings of management. It is a sign that the manager wants to deal with a problem, not deal with the subordinates. It might be simple, but it makes a significant difference for the employees. Additionally the manager needs to remember that even if disciplinary interview originates from his or her problem about the contract, performance etc. one needs to be neutral in the statements. For example, if a worker is obviously distracted during work and makes mistakes, the manager should start the disciplinary interview by saying "You have been seemingly distracted during work..." rather than "your distraction at work is deplorable". Those two might seem the same, but the second sentence might lead to the worker saying he or she has for example a sick family member. In such case the manager is expected to be embarrassed and further discussion about solving the issue is much harder. (Torrington, Hall & Taylor 2008, 623)

The next step is to gather information and find a good way of explaining to the workers, what the cause for this particular disciplinary interview is. It is also a good thing to ask the worker's opinions on the matter, because things that might seem trivial for an employee might make an important impact on the manager. A good relation with workers and well developed questioning skills should make this part much easier.

It can happen that once the manager explains the situation to the workers, and come to mutual understanding, just as in grievance interview, he or she will be able to work out a solution. Disciplinary problems can be solved by not only managers, but also the workers themselves. For example, if a problem is that one of the employees does not follow safety

precautions, one way could be for the worker to pay better attention to those rules on his/her own, or the manager can make this worker go through training once more, perhaps together with new workers.

There are multiple ways in which a manager can try and put the solution into action. One of them is persuasion. Giving the employees a demonstration that unless the situation gets better, they will not achieve what they want can make their behaviour change very quickly. That is because the worker believes that the need to change is for his or her own good, and it is beneficial for both sides to implement those changes. Another way is to show disapproval in the worker. The feeling of guilt has long proven to open doors to altering behaviours and making people change their attitude towards certain situations. If neither of those strategies work, there is nothing left but giving a worker penalty. In rare cases it can be a fine, but most of the times it is a rebuke, compulsory training or relocation of the worker.

Most of the actions taken during discipline are connected to both parties. A manager gives his/her opinion, and together with the worker they work out a solution, on which both of them need to put effort. The ratio of how much work is put by the worker, and how much by the manager can vary depending on a case. (SFEDI 2015; mylawyer 2015)

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

Taking all into consideration, this gathered information should prove useful to any prospective Human Resource manager. This thesis aims to create a general image of what to expect from being an HR specialist, as well as give better understanding of how interviews work, and what are the practical implementations of the knowledge presented.

Writing the thesis was not easy. I needed to check many different sources, most of them from the Internet (see the reference part of the document). They each contained quite vague information, but combined together I was able to create what you have just read. Of course my own knowledge has been included in this document. I do not guarantee that my thesis can be surely used as a guide for what awaits a person in the future. The point of this was for a person such as me, who has not yet had experience as an HR specialist, to find and put together the most important knowledge connected to what kind of skills are specific to this area, and I decided to concentrate on interviews, as they are a major part of what Human Resources Management is.

Summing up what we have learned, first of all I was able to determine the general idea of what Human Resource Management actually is. In the chapter 2 I wrote what the objectives behind HR are, as well as the basic definition of each of them. Next I focused on the skills. I hope in that part I emphasised enough how important interactive skills are for all the managerial work, so not only for Human Resource management, but since such skills are used in contact with people, they are most vital for any manager. I determined that interactions are especially effective when a manager has poise and is responsive to others. Moreover, good understanding of the frame of reference, stereotypes and cognitive dissonance is very useful.

In the same chapter I discussed the basic types of interactions, briefly describing each of them in order to help one understand what to expect while interviewing an employee, or while being interviewed. Further I dedicated a specific sub-chapter for both listening and feedback, because they are crucial skills to have in human interactions, especially in a managerial position. Listening included many important skills such as controlling the tone of voice, giving attention and keeping eye contact. They are important to train in order to become a good listener, which is one of the main information-gathering tools during an

interview. The same goes for feedback, where reflection and summary skills help in putting together that information during the wrap-up of the interview.

Once I finished writing about the skills, it was time to move on to the interviews section. At first each type of an interview was supposed to have their own chapter, but once I finished writing the general information about a selection interview, I learned that they are not necessarily that much different. That is why I decided to put them all together into one larger chapter, writing a sub-chapter about each type of the interview.

To sum up what information I have gathered about the selection interview it can be said, that it still remains the main way in which companies recruit their employees. That is why it is so important to learn what to expect and how to properly prepare for either being interviewed for a job, or already conducting the selection process for your company. I described different strategies towards such an interview and then described the main aspects of it, i.e. the preparation and timetabling, reception and creating the right setting. Those aspects can be connected to all the other interviews as well.

Next there was the appraisal interview. It has the hidden potential when it is done well, and even though many companies neglect it, when I read about it I believed it to be a very important part of HR management to be considered, and hopefully a prospective specialist will remember it. I discussed the common issues that one can meet in the case of appraisal, and then I described the general structure of the appraisal interview. If a manager will train in creating a good appraisal, it helps evaluate and improve the career plan for his or her workers and the manager as well, improving the general performance in the company.

When talking about improving the company through training workers, coaching is a very valid issue to remember. What I have learned about it were the useful classifications of different types of learners, and thanks to that knowledge one is able to determine what type of a learner a specific person is, which then helps to choose the right approach to teaching that person. Coaching is a teaching method that concentrates on improving already developed skills, and that is why the before mentioned skills of listening and evaluating are so important in here (chapter 4.3).

Finally there are disciplinary and grievance interviews. They are really important for any manager, because sooner or later there will be worker-related issues that will need to be solved. The grievance interview comes from the workers who might have an issue with what the managers are doing. The opposite happens in the disciplinary interview, when it is the manager who expresses his dissatisfaction with a certain aspect of the worker's performance. I discussed how to prepare for such interviews, because the preparation had a large amount of information on itself, which is why I decided it needed to be described separately. After that I wrote what I have learned about the structure of both of those interviews.

If the person reading this thesis is a student and he or she is considering becoming a Human Resource manager, hopefully my thesis will be able to give some idea of what is behind this profession, and maybe give the person time to prepare oneself and one's skills, so that finding a job will be much easier.

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