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Prof. Aleksy Pocztowski [2007]

Zarządzanie zasobami ludzkimi [Human resource management]

PWE Publishers

HR specialists are a group of people who are particularly interested in continuous development, open to new trends, and in search of information about more efficient methods of managing the most valuable capital of every organization—workers. The newest book by Prof. Aleksy Pocztowski is designated for such readers. The name of the author requires no presentation. His publications and educational activities have been well known in this community for years.

The quality differentiating this newest publication is its comprehensive treatment of problems of human resource management. The book's content—contained in eleven chapters spanning 450 pages—discusses practically all personnel questions in contemporary organizations in an in-depth manner. In this regard it may be compared with the fundamental work of M. Armstrong. The book is also characterized by a high theoretical level. Prof. Pocztowski creatively utilizes today's achievements in theoretical thought while simultaneously presenting the newest contemporary state of knowledge based on current world literature in this scientific discipline.

The first part is a discussion on the genesis and development of human resource management that leads the author to a formulation of the essence of modern HRM. Chapter I is especially deserving of attention. It contains a systematization of qualities characterizing human resource management as well as a projection of directions of the future evolution of this management concept. It seems that thoughts on a network creating value in the area of human capital accurately depicts the future of HRM. The second chapter presents external and internal human resource management conditions. Among them special attention is paid to matters of strategy and organizational culture. The place and role of the personnel department in a contemporary organization is also shown.

The bulk of the book is made up of seven chapters devoted to the main task areas of the personnel function of a company—employment planning, the shaping of its state and the forming of its structure, employee assessment, effect management, human resource development, the molding of remuneration, as well as other labor conditions and relations. Prof. Poczowski expanded the content of the book to include discussion devoted to managing people in the organization, and he dedicating a separate chapter to looking at managerial roles, styles, and functions. This is an original approach as no known textbook on HRM touches this subject. This gives rise to a question: To what extent does the look taken on by the author correspond to the essence of HRM? Definitions published to date treat HRM as a certain system of action. For example, T. Listwan understands the concept as “a set of actions tied with people...” A. Poczowski proposes a significantly broader approach by interpreting HRM as “a defined concept for managing the personnel function in the company” (p. 34). There is no doubt that this is an inspiring proposal for discussion on the essence of HRM subject to conditions of the new economy.

A valuable supplement to theoretical content, contained in subsequent chapters, is an illustration of discussion on the results of empirical studies showing the practice of human resource management as applied under Polish social and economic conditions.

Human Resource Management is the second issue of a book under the same title by the Polish Economic Publishers (PWE); the first was published in 2003. Three years have passed since then, which seem to be an extremely long period of time for management science and practice in this day and age of the knowledge-based economy. Dynamic changes have not bypassed this specialty. It is for this reason that HR professionals will reach for the current publication with interest and they will not be let down.

The new issue has been expanded by a chapter devoted to the management of work efficiency, which in my view gives this book a special value. This question, of key importance in the practice of human resource management, has to date concentrated on the worker and team level in Polish literature. However, the author proposes a comprehensive model for managing efficiency and integrating actions undertaken on all level of the organizational structure, whose starting point is the formulation of organizational mission, vision, and strategy as well as communicating it to all workers. The author presents vertical organizational integration—managing through effects—as well as horizontal integration—integration with other areas of the personnel function. He then characterizes individual phases of the effect management cycle with special stress on the evaluation phase. From a utilitarian point of view, of great value are the author’s comments on tasks and competencies of entities involved in this cycle, including primarily all line managers and personnel specialists. This thinking is summed up by an analysis of factors of special importance for the functioning of the management through effects systems. The integration–process approach assumed by Prof. Poczowski as well as substantive con-

tent presented prove the all-encompassing look at questions of management through effects, never before seen in Polish literature.

Such subject matter is not the only indication of this book's content being adapted to the current state of knowledge and practical achievements in human resource management. This is also borne out by the broad treatment of questions of internationalization of human resource management. As is rightly noted by A. Poczowski, there are two parallel phenomena occurring in human management on international markets—convergence and divergence. This requires the reconciling of global and local standards, which means that the management system in international companies is characterized by specific qualities such as the larger number of tasks and their related risk as compared with companies active exclusively on the domestic market, greater interference in the personal lives of employees, the impact of cultural variety, and the meeting of very specific challenges such as the need to break through the cultural shock that threatens workers taking up jobs abroad. It is for this reasons that I consider the following statement by the author as being of great value: "For personnel managers this means a need to go beyond boundaries delimited by practices formed in the past in their thinking and action, and leave the framework of a single company as well as the limits of single countries in the quest for the best way to create and deliver value in the area of the personnel function" (p. 100).

A successive very important problem touched upon in the discussed book is career management. This is understood by the author as the "process of planning, implementing, and monitoring the objectives and strategy" of the careers of individual people (p. 311). For this process to be effective it is necessary to look at the space and perspective of the professional career. The author also calls attention to the need for familiarity with employee orientation with respect to the professional career as well as identification of career objectives. From a learning theory point of view, of extreme importance are the assumptions behind the new career model as well as the new paradigm of thinking about the career.

The book's content also looks at many challenges emerging in contemporary human resource management such as flexible employment and its related new forms of work organization, including tele-work, personnel leasing, talent management systems, and matters guarantying work-life balance.

A significant value of the present issue of *Human Resource Management* is the development and appropriate stressing of several detailed questions that are of no less importance in management practice. One such matter is the course of the training process. In connection with the planning of personnel placement, the author calls our attention to the creation of personality profiles. It is in this context that the problem of competency identification is looked at. Also developed is the problem of the internal structure of managerial remuneration.

The book ends with a chapter bearing a characteristic title: “Perfect Human Resource Management.” It presents tools that have not gained popularity to date such as the personal audit, the outsourcing of the personnel function, personality benchmarking, and employee opinion polls. This chapter also found place for questions of personnel counseling, which in the context of the growing role of personnel departments as in-house consultants, seems very valuable. The chapter also has enormous practical value from the point of view of the real needs of Polish companies.

The above comments grant me the right to express the conviction that in spite of the relative saturation of the publishing market with books devoted to human resource management, this book by Prof. Aleksy Poczowski will meet with the keen interest of managers and HR specialists. Perhaps, the reader will feel unsatiated in some matters due to a lack of a univocal stand on the part of the author or with respect to the question put. However, as the author explains, his intention was to inspire creative thinking in the realm of HRM, not the delivery of ready solutions, because there is no such thing.

The well-ordered, logical content of argument as well as the detailed structuring of the content make A. Poczowski’s book a manual of significant educational quality. It is for this reason that I can, with complete certainty, recommend it to students, post-graduate students, and participants in other training programs in the field of human resource management as a compendium of current knowledge in this field.

Zarządzanie zasobami ludzkimi [Human resource management] Oficyna Ekonomiczna [Economic Publishers], Cracow, 2002, 2005.

T. Listwan, “Przedmiot, ewolucja i znaczenia zarządzania kadrami” [The subject, evolution, and meaning of staff management], in *Zarządzanie kadrami* [Staff management], C.H. Beck Publisher, Warsaw, p. 1.

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