HR STRATEGY AND ORGANIZATION MANUAL

Final Report

SUPPORTING THE A & E BUSINESS COUNCIL IN DEVELOPING HR FRAME WORK

FINAL REPORT

USAID JORDAN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

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AUTHOR: ZWEIGWHITE

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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For architecture and engineering firms, human resources management means carrying out four basic functions: staff recruitment, staff retention, staff development, and minimizing employment related liability issues. Because these firms sell the time, expertise, and advice of people, human resources management should be one of firm leaders' primary concerns.

The Human Resources area of the firm is unfortunately often viewed as one of the least strategic functions of the firm—and consequently given the least amounts of investment and attention. Architecture and engineering firms deliver design services rather than products—so the firm's production, source of creativity, and talents that differentiate it from the competition are tied up in the employees of the firm. This makes the staff of an architecture or engineering firm an incredibly valuable asset.

The group best suited to guide, protect, advise, and monitor this asset is the HR group within the firm. Only senior management can grant the group the authority, autonomy, and financial resources to ensure the firm takes care of its employees; but the best firms make that a reality and are the most successful.

The following sub areas were identified as those that need improvement and are addressed in this manual:

- Setting and communicating HR strategy

- Reviewing the organizational structure so as to reflect the importance of the HR Director or equivalent's role in the company

- Staffing HR Departments with professional employees and providing its management with the required support

- Involving HR directors in the business planning process

- Documenting HR policies and procedures

- Publishing job descriptions for all positions and ensure their accessibility to employees at all times

- Writing and communicating code of ethics

- Installing and utilizing Human Resource Information System (HRIS)

CHAPTER ONE

HR STRATEGY AND ORGANIZATION

1. SETTING THE HR GROUP'S STRATEGY

1.1 HR Role and Definition

The term "human resources department" can mean anything from the firm's office manager or a member of the finance department who acts part-time as the human resource director, to a full-blown unit of the firm complete with a human resources director and a full complement of HR specialists.

Not all firms have human resources departments or full-time human resources staff—but because all firms have human resources issues, someone in the firm must assume that role. In many cases, it is the firm's president, CEO, managing partner, or head of finance or administration who assumes top responsibility for overseeing human resources functions.

It is generally recognized that HR is responsible for staff recruitment, staff retention, staff development, and minimizing employment related liability issues. There are more specific tasks and services the HR department provides to the firm which fall under these four categories. Many of those are discussed in detail either in this manual or in another.

Primarily, the HR group is a supportive group whose role is to multiply the efforts of the teams within the firm. The authority granted to the HR group comes from senior leadership. To reach this level of legitimacy, the group has to be viewed as a strategic component of the firm that positively impacts the bottom line.

1.2 HR's Historic Position

As mentioned above, in order to legitimize and strengthen the position of the HR group within the firm, the group must distinguish itself as a viable business unit. It is extremely common for senior leadership as well as the rest of the firm to view human resources an unnecessary and expensive aspect of the business. There are several reasons for this, including:

- Senior leadership limits the responsibilities delegated to the HR group as well as its decision-making capabilities—thereby minimizing the profile and usefulness of the group.

- The HR director or manager fails to design a strategic plan that includes strategic and tactical initiatives and budgeted amounts for those efforts.

- The HR group fails to prove and communicate the value it provides to the firm as a whole.

- Insufficient staffing within the HR group cannot handle the inquiries and demands of the firm. The "customer service" provided by HR is, therefore, regarded as poor and incompetent.

- The HR group is not represented at critical meetings that plan and discuss the goals of the firm. These may include annual strategic planning meetings, board of director meetings, shareholder meetings, executive planning meetings, or managerial meetings.

- Other firm managers and leaders view HR as reactive versus proactive when it comes to their primary duties, particularly recruiting and training.

It is essential to mention again that two ingredients are required to legitimize the strategic position of HR within the firm: senior management granting that authority and HR establishing a plan that, when executed, provides tangible value to the firm.

1.3   Establishing a Strategic Position

An HR group is not a revenue-generating unit within a firm—however—that does not mean that it cannot operate strategically. In fact, it must in order to legitimize its purpose. In operating more strategically, it unilaterally benefits the entire organization at all levels and team members and staff are optimized. Again, the HR group is a supportive group whose role is to multiply the efforts of the teams within the firm.

1.1   Designing a Plan

Just as the firm has a strategic plan and a marketing plan, the HR group also has to have a plan that defines the direction the group will take and the initiatives intended for the coming year. No two plans will look alike and they should be scalable to firm size, however, ideal questions this plan should be addressing include:

- What issues do we want to address as we go forward? What issues are important for our teams at this firm?

- What is the purpose or vision for this group?

- How do we want the employees of this firm to describe this group?

- What kind of people will we need?

- How is the group going to look? What is the expertise we need to have on staff?

- What should this group be doing?

- What are the initiatives we want to be achieving?

- What are the services we are going to be providing?

- What are the resources for implementation?

- Who will be collaborating with us?

- What will success for this group look like?

1.2   Presenting the Plan

The plan will only have validity if presented to and approved by senior management. Once it is written, the plan should be discussed at length with the leadership team and edited as deemed appropriate. Shortly after, the plan should be launched—not only as an agenda for the HR group—but also communicated across the firm. Communicating the plan will be discussed in the next section.

1.3   Assessment

One of the initiatives within the new HR plan could include surveying the firm to assess how it views the HR group—particularly the value it sees the HR group providing to them as employees. This provides a starting point from which the HR group can work to determine

how the rest of the firm finds value (or does not find value) from the services it receives from the group. If a negative or neutral connotation regarding the group exists, implementing a new plan and expecting cooperation and respect may be more difficult than it would be if the firm already views the HR group positively.

Running such an assessment may not always be possible or viewed itself to have value. So even if such a test is not conducted, the HR group should be constantly assessed as to how it:

- Provides practical orientation on office procedures, protocols, standards
- Provides clear, useful information to questions regarding benefits, policies, and training
- Is a reliable, unbiased, true employee advocate
- Is available and dependable for personal coaching, counseling
- Develops career and project relevant learning and teaching initiatives
- Proactively directs recruiting and retention efforts
- Provides all services with the highest level of dedication to the employee
- Engages in other relevant, firm-specific initiatives
- Achieves the goals and carries out the role as promised

The plan should be written so minimal changes are made to it through the course of the year. It should remain dynamic but allowing constant changes to it will confuse staff members and challenge the seriousness of the plan. Investing the time upfront to solidify a plan that has full financial support by leadership is essential.

1.4   Updating the Plan

The HR director or point person for the HR plan should be present at the firm's strategic planning meetings as an active participant. As the person most aware of the firm's human resources, this person brings valuable insight to the strategic discussion. Most yearly planning meetings focus on growth and direction and these can only be carried out with the employees at the firm. To discuss firm growth is to discuss whether the firm has the right talent in place and the right amount of talent in place. All firms have to hire or develop its staff and this where HR plays a significant role in strategic planning. HR contributes insight on potential initiatives essential for long-term growth, success, and quality performance. HR contributes not only to the larger discussion of the firm but updates the group plan on a yearly basis as well—including goals, budget, and timeframe.

2.   HR STRUCTURE IN THE ORGANIZATION

An organization or group should be structured in the most optimized way for team members to successfully accomplish the firm's or the group's strategies. Structural reorientation will not make a bad strategy good or elevate poor leaders and managers to a level required for success. Easily identifiable roles, responsibilities, and reporting lines are required– and essential if the group is going to function effectively. Likewise, competent and willing team members are an equally important ingredient in this process.

Only after the group's strategic plan has been written and approved can the group determine what needs to be accomplished, how it is going to be accomplished, and who is going to accomplish it. Only after the group's strategic plan has been written and approved is it

appropriate to assess where in the organization the HR group fits and to whom the HR group or manager will report.

The organizational position of the HR group alone does not grant that group authority or necessarily reflect the importance of the group to the firm. The HR manager or group is very important to the firm but that importance is first reflected by the CEO or firm president and conveyed by granting the group autonomy. That said, the following information on organizational structure is common in the industry.

2.1 Reporting Lines

When the firm has a dedicated HR manager or director, that person typically reports to the Chief Operating Officer or the CEO directly. In very larger firms (500+), the director may report to the chief of administration, whom is typically a vice president reporting directly to the CEO. Because the HR group oversees and shepherds the human capital of the firm, that department or individual should be reporting as near to the top of the organizational structure as possible.

Guidelines to consider when thinking of the placement and role of the HR department within the firm:

- The size of the firm will dictate whom the HR manager reports to

- The HR manager reports to only one person—not two or several

- Any staff members working within the HR department report to the HR manager and no one else

2.1 Organizational Structure Examples

The following are illustrative examples only of possible reporting lines within an architecture or engineering firm.

Example 1:
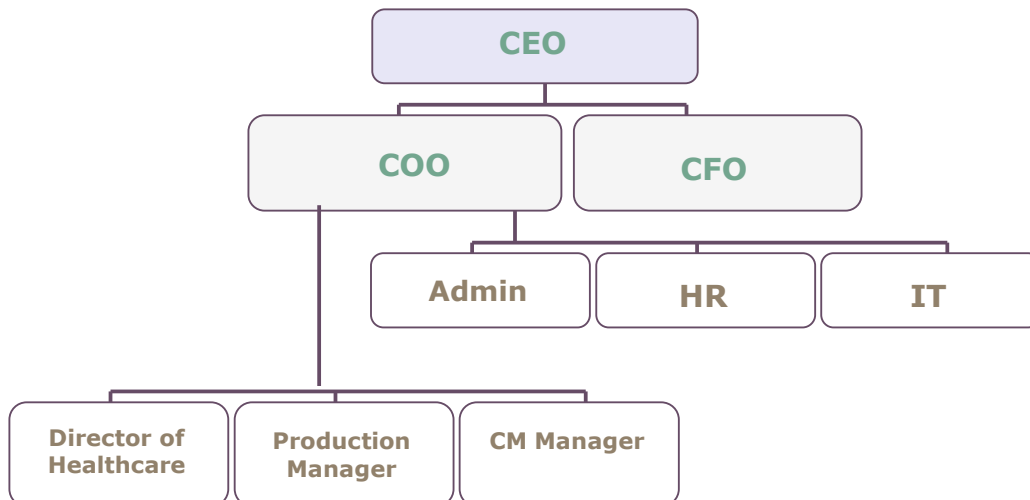
Example 2:
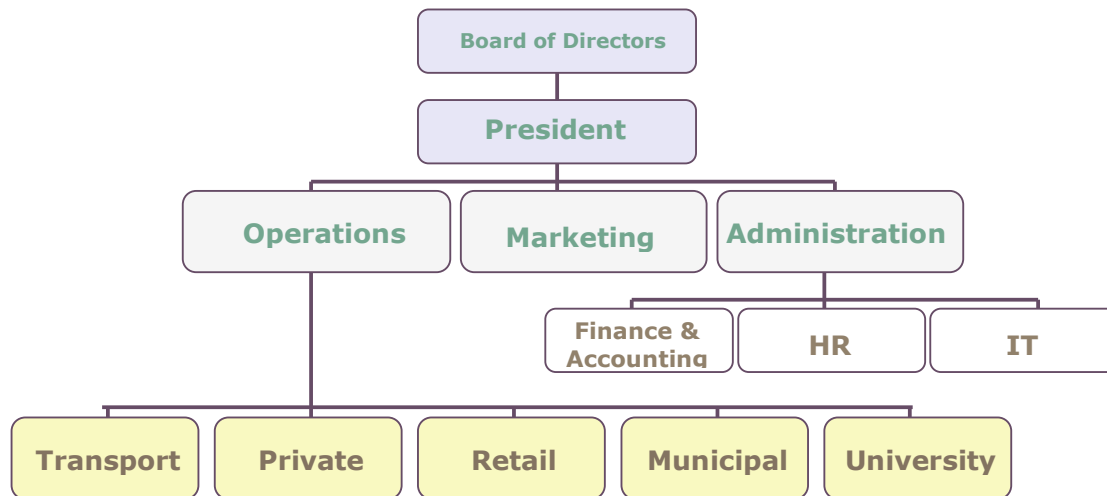
2.2 Benefits of Structuring

With HR reporting as close to the top as possible, the benefits gained include:

- It decentralizes the decision-making process and delegates decision making power—thereby legitimatizing the HR group as a strategic component of the firm

- This structure also fosters clear channels of communication and accountability because roles are well defined and employees know to whom they report and where to go to for technical and personal issues to discuss

2.3 Viability

The HR department will only gain traction and full legitimacy of its role when senior level management grants it through words and actions. Key considerations for this to happen include:

- Senior leadership bestows full leadership and ownership to the manager or director of this function and trusts that person fully

- Leadership accepts the HR group as a valuable support function within the firm and not as overhead

- HR establishing itself as a business unit like any other that contributes to the success of the firm and proves it

2.2 Staffing within the Group

As with any group or business unit within a firm, it is essential to have the right team in place. The HR group is essentially a support function that serves internal "clients". All roles within the HR group are highly service oriented. Therefore, in addition to having

personalities that will fit the culture of the firm, the staff on the HR team should be very skilled in customer service.

2.1   Staffing and Staff Size

In order to carry out the tasks and work that falls under the HR umbrella and accomplish the group's plan, it is necessary to have a competent individual or staff in place to do so. Guidelines for staffing considerations in the HR group include:

- Most firms have 1 full time HR person on staff for every 63 employees

- A majority of HR managers or directors have five or more years of experience in HR related work—whether in the AE industry or another industry

- Larger firms (150+) will divide the HR department into categories: payroll and benefits specialists and recruiting, training, and retention specialists

- HR assistants will often split their time between the HR group and another administrative group such as accounting

2.2   Filling Roles within the HR group

As with any position in the firm, filling the roles within the HR group requires the manager to determine:

- The work and tasks that have to be done

- If the current staff is sufficient to carry out these tasks effectively

- If not, write a position description for the new role that includes tasks, responsibilities, and expectations, and establish salary ranges

- Recruit and hire the best candidate whose expertise and instincts would best carry out the role and serve the firm

2.3   Evaluating Current Roles within the HR group

It is also important to determine whether the team currently in place is the best team to carry out the responsibilities and initiatives required. This should be done after the strategic plan for the group has been written. Once it has been written and approved by senior management, the HR director or appropriate point person should:

- Evaluate all team members for their performance in their current roles.

- Determine if the new plan increases or decreases the responsibilities and duties of each team member within the group.

- Assess each team member on whether they have the required skills and abilities for the position—including any new responsibilities that will be added.

- Assess whether each team member is a good cultural fit for the group and for the firm.

- Determine if the gaps in skills can be closed through training. If so, plan the appropriate training for the team member. If not, determine if that team member should remain on the team. This process should not be oversimplified as stated here. It should follow a thorough process as outlined in the manual Performance Appraisals.

2.4 HR Director Trends and Education

The development of the human resources function in most design firms follows the same evolutionary pattern as other management functions. It typically begins as a part-time role for one of the firm's staff members and eventually grows into a full-time position filled by an experienced, educated HR director. According to the ZweigWhite 2009 Policies, Procedures, and Benefits Survey, the following trends were found relative to the HR director:

- The vast majority of HR directors have a four-year bachelor's degree (in business) and nearly half have a master's degree or MBA

- Nearly a third of HR directors are SPHR certified (Senior Professional in Human Resources)

- Most HR directors have at least 15 years of experience in the field of HR and have been with their particular firm for at least six years

- Most HR director participate in the firm's business planning process

- Other certifications HR directors may hold include:

  - PHR – Professional in Human Resources

  - CBP – Certified Benefits Professional

  - CCP – Certified Compensation Professional

  - CEBS – Certified Employee Benefit Plan Specialist

  - GPHR – Global Professional in Human Resources

3. COMMUNICATING THE HR STRATEGY

3.1 Communication and Campaign

The HR group has to treat the launch of its strategy like a marketing campaign. For many firms, such an initiative is even celebrated. This continues to give recognition to the HR function and reminds the entire firm that this group has a special role. Once a plan has been written and sanctioned by senior management, the group should consider the following:

- Does the HR group now have a vision of what it will accomplish within the firm? If so, it needs to be shared.

- Just as an architecture or engineering firm has an identified list of services available to its clientele, the HR group needs to promote the services and expertise it provides to its internal clients. The firm will view the HR group as a team of experts, rather than as administrative overhead.

3.1 Where and How to Communicate the Plan

There are many possibilities for communicating the group's plan to the firm. The HR director should take into account the firm's culture, readiness, and technological platform. Some suggestions include the following:

- HR area and folders on company intranets

- HR pages, information, and messages displayed on SharePoint

- Plan drafted on PowerPoint with key messages

- Special firm meeting called to launch new or annual HR plan

- HR plan announced at regular staff or company meetings

- Email sent by CEO or President acknowledging the upcoming launch by the HR director

- Special email sent by HR director announces plans and initiatives for the year

- Announcements followed by HR meetings with all heads of departments or managers to discuss particular details, answer questions, set expectations, and reach agreement on essentials of collaboration

- HR solicits the assistance of the marketing group to discuss creative and innovative ways of launching and communicating the plan throughout the firm

3.2   Consistent Communication

In order to gain a stronger position within the firm and earn the support of senior leadership, the HR group must remain visible. This is accomplished in several ways, including:

- Having a regular presence at staff meetings and updating management groups on the progress of the group's strategic plan

- Openly discussing successful initiatives that benefit the employees of the firm

- Updating the firm on policies, procedures, relevant changes in a consistent, recognizable format (email, intranet, SharePoint) and making the information easy to access

- Consistently delivering great service to the internal clients of the firm

CHAPTER 2

THE HR FUNCTION

The HR group is a vital and essential part of the firm and the areas of responsibility that fall within that domain are many. Three important topics will be covered in this chapter.

1.   POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Regardless of firm size, all organizations should have some sort of guideline for policies and procedures written and available to employees. These guidelines are developed in an attempt to maintain consistency and fairness with regard to staff and overall company policies. They also direct preferred behaviors and attitudes across the organization. The HR group is responsible for not only crafting these procedures, but also making sure that all employees have access to this information and are educated on its contents.

Organizational policies and procedures can cover a wide area of issues. Those listed here are the ones commonly found and practiced in architecture and engineering firms.

Once these policies and procedures are established to the legal requirements of the region and cultural preferences of the firm, they are generally posted on a shared drive, distributed by an employee's supervisor, or made available for reference on the firm's intranet.

Generally, all new employees receive coaching on these policies within the first week of employment. If established new, the HR group should launch the new policies with firm-wide education and training.

1.1   Company Background and Organization

Before getting into the specifics of firm policies and procedures, employees should be aware of the firm's goals and history. Doing so will help employees understand the company's mission and vision.

1.1   Mission Statement

A mission statement should articulate the company's reasons for operation and goals as they pertain to services provided to clients.

- We are here to provide our clients with the best selection of professional services with an attitude of friendliness, eagerness to serve, and readiness to listen. We are committed to making our firm a pleasant place to conduct architectural/engineering business, and to be an active, responsible contributor to the lives of our staff, clients, and community.

1.2   Company Values

In addition to their mission statement, the firm should cover the specifics of the values by which it expects its employees to abide.

- At this company, we believe: Honesty and integrity come first. The principles of stewardship lead to a balance of environment, economy, and community. Our people are our most valued resource. In respecting a balance between professional and personal lives. In active participation in civic, community, and professional organizations. In delivering quality services resulting in long-term professional relationships.

1.3 Client Relations

It goes without saying that clients should receive respect at all times, firms should list their detailed expectations for client relations.

- It is essential that the company's clients are satisfied with our service. Nothing is more important. Relations with clients must always be honest, and it is imperative that we constantly view matters from their perspective.

1.4 Confidentiality

Depending on their level within the firm and ownership status, employees may have access to any range of confidential and private information relating to the firm and to clients. For this reason, many firms require new employees to sign confidentiality agreements or sign individual ones with clients on a project-to-project basis.

- The company expects absolute honesty as a prerequisite.

- The firm's business is confidential and release of the firm's business information to individuals outside the firm is prohibited.

- All members of the company are to respect the confidences placed in us by our clients. The professional relationship between each client and the company demands that there be no disclosure of any information about projects without proper authorization. This includes responses to inquiries about projects or potential projects from local television and radio stations, newspapers, contractors, other professionals, or the public. Similar respect should be given to our relationships with professional consultants.

1.5 Policy Revisions

For a firm's policies and procedures to be official, it is essential the firm regularly review and update the material it contains. Firms that do not update their policies and procedures run the risk of potential conflicts and perhaps even legal issues resulting from outdated or ineffective policies. All firms should have their policies reviewed by legal counsel as an added protective measure.

2.1 Operations

Everything from mail and phone standards to office security and supplies can be considered a part of operations-related policies. Some of these may be more obvious than other types of policies but are recommended nonetheless.

2.1 Visitors

Visitors to the office may include clients, contractors, manufacturers' representatives, employees' friends and family, and other people. For security and other reasons, firms should have a policy regarding office visits by non-employees.

- All visitors to the office should check in with the receptionist, who will notify the employee being called on. This control is necessary to prevent unauthorized visitors from entering the office, to facilitate meetings, and minimize disruption to normal office activity. Inform the receptionist when visitors are expected so that preparations appropriate to the nature of the visit can be made. The office clerk can assist in providing coffee and food when appropriate to the nature of the visit, as requested by a principal.

2.2   Telephone Calls

Firms should state their expectations regarding when employees are allowed to use the company phone lines for personal reasons.

- Our company maintains telephones for business purposes; therefore, it is vital to the business that these phones be available when needed. Excessive personal calls tie up outside lines, resulting in busy signals. Please be discrete in your personal use of the firm's telephone system.

- Personal cellular telephones can be distracting to other staff; thus their use in the office is discouraged. In the event that personal devices must be used in the office, they must be set to silent or vibrate.

- Personal phone calls (incoming and outgoing) are discouraged, but, when necessary, should be kept at a minimum in both number and in length. Employees are encouraged to keep personal calls as brief as possible.

2.3   Company-Owned Property

Firms should state their rules for company-owned equipment including who may use it, when, and for what purpose.

- You are expected to use proper care when using company property and equipment. No property may be removed from the premises without the proper authorization of management. The use of company property or equipment for anything other than company authorized and directed work is forbidden and may be grounds for dismissal. Any damage that occurs to company property needs to be reported immediately to your supervisor.

- Lockers, desks, computers, vehicles, and all other equipment are company property and must be maintained according to our rules and regulations. They must be kept clean and are to be used only for work-related purposes.

2.4   Housekeeping

A clean office not only presents an organized firm to potential clients and visitors, but also ensures employees are able to do their work efficiently.

- Housekeeping is the joint responsibility of the janitorial staff and all employees. If a spill occurs during the day, please make every effort to clean it up.

3.1   Personnel and Hiring

Policies dealing with personnel issues, especially those regarding the hiring and termination of employees, can be confusing. Thorough procedures will keep the company functioning effectively and eliminate potential misunderstanding.

3.1   Employee Referrals

By considering qualified candidates their current employees recommend, firms are already a step ahead in the hiring process. Many firms encourage employees to use their personal and professional contacts to help the firm find potential new hires.

- Our company encourages employees to identify friends or acquaintances who are interested in employment opportunities and refer qualified outside applicants for open

jobs. Employees should obtain permission from the individual before making a referral, share their knowledge of the organization, and not make commitments or oral promises of employment.

- An employee should submit the referral's résumé and samples (if appropriate) to the general manager for an open job. If the referral is interviewed, the referring employee will be notified of the initial interview and the final selection decision.

3.2   Diversity in Hiring

It may be required by law that companies maintain an equal employment opportunity policy to eliminate bias in hiring and retaining staff.

- It is the policy of the company to ensure equal opportunity for all employees and applicants with regard to recruitment, hiring, placement, promotion, compensation, benefits, and training. In all such activities, the company will not discriminate against any qualified person because of race, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, disability, or sexual orientation.

- We are fully committed to equal opportunity and view this plan as a positive program to encourage qualified minorities, women, disabled, and covered veterans to avail themselves of their opportunities. The company recognizes that the ultimate success of the program will be largely the result of good-faith efforts. Please discuss equal employment opportunity-related questions with the human resources director or any other member of management.

- We are an equal opportunity employer and make employment decisions based on merit. We want to have the best available person in every job. Our policy prohibits discrimination based on race, color, creed, gender, religion, marital status, age, national origin or ancestry, physical or mental disability, medical condition including genetic characteristics, or sexual orientation.

3.3   Introductory Period

Firms often require new employees to complete an introductory or probationary period of employment. During this time both the employee and employer have a chance to evaluate whether they feel the firm and the new employee are a good fit for each other.

- The introductory period is intended to give new employees the opportunity to demonstrate their ability to achieve a satisfactory level of performance and to determine whether the new position meets their expectations. We use this period to evaluate the employee's capabilities, work habits, and overall performance. Either the employee or the company may end the employment relationship at will at any time during or after the introductory period, with or without cause or advance notice.

- The first six months of continuous employment at our company is considered an introductory period. During this time, you will learn your responsibilities, become acquainted with fellow employees, and determine whether you are happy with your job. Your supervisor will closely monitor your performance.

3.4   Personnel Records

While firms will enforce strict confidentiality regarding firm-wide access to employee files, most firms allow employees access to see their personal files.

- It is the policy of the company to maintain personnel records for employees and past employees in order to document employment-related decisions, evaluate and assess policies, and comply with government record keeping and reporting requirements.

- Each employee is required to complete a personnel record and other forms which provide information for payroll, eligibility for the company's insurance programs, and any other documents to support government regulations.

- The company strives to balance its need to obtain, use, and retain employment information with each individual's right to privacy. To this end, it attempts to restrict the personnel information maintained to that which is necessary for the conduct of its business or which is required by law.

3.5   Voluntary Termination

When an employee leaves the firm voluntarily, firms usually ask for sufficient notification of his or her departure in order to allow time to replace the individual. The time required may be influenced by employment agreements or by law.

- When an employee resigns or officially asks to be separated from the company, it is a voluntary termination. The company should be informed of voluntary terminations at least two weeks in advance. The employee should give written advance notice to his or her supervisor.

3.6   Involuntary Termination

Whether an employee is not performing up to expectations or has been found guilty of misconduct, firms inevitably have to deal with terminating certain staff members' employment. To alleviate further complications during this difficult time, firms should make sure their policies regarding involuntary termination are clear to all employees.

- Continued association with the firm requires rendering honest, capable, efficient, and loyal service. Termination will be effected for lack of capability, inefficiency or misconduct, or in the event a reduction in personnel becomes necessary for any reason. Anyone, regardless of length of service, may be discharged at any time for dishonesty, flagrant neglect of work, insubordination, possession of or being under the influence of alcohol or narcotics while on company business or company premises, or for any reason which jeopardizes the reputation of the firm. Terminations may also occur at any time if a reduction in force becomes necessary.

3.7   Layoffs

Architecture and engineering firms occasionally find themselves with the need to reduce their staff sizes through layoffs. In such instances, it is important for firms to inform their employees of their policies on the subject.

- When a permanent or temporary reduction in the workforce occurs, the company will make reasonable efforts, including reduced working hours where feasible, to prevent reductions in the total workforce. However, the company retains the right to reduce its workforce, either permanently or temporarily, because of substantial changes in financial status.

4.1   Work Schedule

Every business needs to define its requirements regarding work hours and expectations.

4.1 Hours of Work

While the standard business workweek is 40 hours, those who have worked in the A/E industry know this is highly variable. Travel and job site visits can alter work schedules, so companies should make sure to set policies on time requirements.

- Our company is normally open for business between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. (Sunday through Thursday). Your supervisor will assign your individual work schedule. All employees are expected to be at their desks or workstations at the start of their scheduled shifts, ready to work.

- Exchanging work schedules with other employees is discouraged. However, if you need to exchange schedules, notify your supervisor, who may authorize an exchange if possible. Work schedule exchanges will not be approved for the mere convenience of an employee or if the exchange interferes with normal operations or results in excessive overtime.

4.2 Breaks

Breaks are an essential factor in creating fair working conditions. In order to maintain a productive workforce, firms should set guidelines on adequate break times for the employees' benefit as well as their own.

- Employees may take work breaks at their discretion. However, the total break time shall not exceed 10 minutes in the morning and 10 minutes in the afternoon. Work breaks shall not be used for visiting or otherwise disturbing other employees that are working.

- When taking a lunch break other than the noon hour (between 12:00 p.m. and 1:00 p.m.), please inform the receptionist that you will either be leaving earlier or returning later. This courtesy on your part will greatly assist our receptionist in handling telephone inquiries and appointments.

4.3 Time Sheets

For an industry in which a person's time is valuable and billable, the accurate reporting of this time is essential. Most firms collect time on a weekly basis.

- All employees are responsible for reporting their hours worked on a company time sheet. Instructions on completing the time sheet will be provided by the employee's supervisor.

- All hours worked will be charged to a project number, which will be supplied by the employee's supervisor. Each employee will also be given a project code list to use in conjunction with the project numbers.

4.4 Punctuality and Attendance

With project team members' dependence on each other, as well as clients' expectations for the availability of project staff, it is essential that employees be in the office when expected. If they are late or will not be coming in to work at all, they should notify their supervisor and have a valid reason.

- Attendance and punctuality are important factors for your success within our firm. We work as a team, and this requires that each person be in the right place at the right time. If you are going to be late for work or absent, it is important to notify your supervisor within one-half hour of the start of your work day.

5.1   Salary and Pay Procedures

Compensation is always going to be an important topic at any firm. Employees want to know what they are worth and how they will be rewarded for their hard work. Laying out specific rules in terms of compensation is important and gives everyone a clear vision of what to expect.

5.1   Pay and Pay Periods

Employees are dependant on their employers to provide their pay in a timely manner. Regardless of the schedule (weekly, bi-weekly, monthly), all firms should have clearly defined, structured timelines for pay periods and the work hours included in those time spans.

- Payroll is on a semi-monthly basis. Payroll checks covering the 1st through the 15th of the month are distributed on the 15th of every month. Checks covering the 16th through month-end are distributed on the last day of the month. When payday falls on a weekend or holiday, the distribution of these checks will be on the preceding business day.

5.2   Compensatory Time

As an alternative to overtime, some firms grant employees compensatory time for all hours worked over the normal workweek. This time allows the employee to take time off in the future, beyond vacation time, as a reward for working overtime.

- It is important to establish who is eligible for compensatory time, how it is earned, how it accrues, how one can request usage of accrued time, and if it expires. Payment of accrued compensatory time is not paid out if an employee leaves the firm for voluntary or involuntary reasons.

5.3   Performance and Salary Reviews

Performance reviews serve one basic function: to evaluate employee performance regularly and systematically at all levels. While salary increases certainly are not guaranteed at each performance appraisal meeting, performance reviews and pay raises are connected and firms often group these policies together. As compensation can be a controversial issue, it is important for companies to map out how employees will be evaluated and state exactly what is expected of them in order to obtain a pay increase. Expanded information on this subject is contained in the manual, Performance Appraisals.

- We believe that the primary purpose of performance reviews is to give each staff member feedback about their past performance, to set goals for the future, and to listen to your input. We want the evaluation process to be cooperative and constructive for all involved. Written notes of the review will be kept in each staff member's personnel file. Such performance reviews shall be held as deemed necessary, at least once a year.

- A performance review does not automatically mean you will receive a wage adjustment. It is a time, however, that you and your supervisor or manager may discuss a wage adjustment. Your wage is based, in part, on the goals and responsibilities set forth by you and your supervisor or manager, but is also dependent on whether the firm is profitable, what part you had in making the firm profitable, and your current wage.

- All employees will be reviewed during January of each year.

- When deemed appropriate by a principal, special reviews at unscheduled times may be performed to recognize both outstanding performance and substandard performance of an employee. A memo summarizing the review will be prepared.

5.4   Promotions

Leaders are extremely valuable in any industry. Employees who possess the rare combination of specialized skills, integrity, loyalty, intelligence, and dedication should be recognized and rewarded. As employees work their way up the ranks of a firm, it is important they know what to strive for in terms of their personal growth and career goals, as well as how their supervisors will evaluate them. Having a clear policy regarding promotions will help both employees and managers work towards specific goals.

- Employees are encouraged to prepare themselves for promotion and assumption of greater responsibilities. The company strives to promote from within, whenever possible, to fill vacant positions.

- Promotions are based on merit, determined by management, and based on performance on past and present assignments. Employees considered for promotions are evaluated on factors such as the following: Technical experience, ability, creativity, management ability, effectiveness of performance, ability to work effectively with other employees, ability to bring in new work, dedication, ability to satisfy clients, and attitude.

6.1   Bonuses and Benefits

Firms have a number of options for compensating their employees outside of annual base salaries and standard benefits. When dealing with bonus plans that can change from year to year (based on the firm's profitability and employee performance), it is important that firms have clearly defined policies so employees know what their employees expect and what is expected from them.

6.1   Performance Bonuses

Most architecture and engineering firms have at least some sort of bonus plan in place. Most of these plans are contingent upon company profits and/or individual performance.

- From time to time, employees may receive monetary bonuses. These are based on individual merit, company profitability, and any other significant factors. Whether or not bonuses are granted, the executive committee determines the amount of bonuses.

7.1   Time Off

An important topic to any employee is time off. What do I do if I need to take a leave of absence? What holidays do we have off? How much vacation time do we get? An employee will look to HR for guidelines and policies for these questions.

7.1   Paid Time Off

It is increasingly common in the architecture and engineering world to offer employees a set amount of time off that can be used as vacation, sick, and/or personal days. With this kind of policy, it is important that employees know exactly how much time they have been allotted and within what parameters this time may be used.

- Eligible employees of the company will accumulate leave hours based on their length of service with the company. Maximum leave accrual is also based on the employee's length of service. Leave time may be used for vacations, illnesses, doctor appointments, funerals, or any reason an employee may need to take time off from work. Illnesses lasting for five consecutive work days or less will be charged against leave time.

7.2   Vacation

Paid vacation is generally accrued over time rather than given as a lump sum annually. Vacation accrual rates vary widely from firm to firm through the industry. Depending on the practice of the organization, that policy should be clearly articulated.

- Vacation time off with pay is available to eligible employees to provide opportunities for rest, relaxation, and personal pursuits.

7.3   Holidays

Regardless of how many days firms offer for holidays, it is important that employees know which days the firm will cover to avoid any unapproved absences or confusion.

- All full-time employees are eligible for these holidays immediately upon employment (list of holidays).

7.4   Personal Business and Emergencies

Inevitably, there are times when employees must take time off for an unforeseen personal emergency. Having clear policies will only help to lessen the frustration in an already stressful situation.

- When personal business or an emergency arises that requires an employee to be absent from the office during business hours, their supervisor should be so informed. The employee is expected to make up the time required for the absence within the same workweek in which it is lost.

8.1   Standards of Conduct

Whether it is written or spoken, every firm has a code of conduct to which all employees should adhere. Specific policies may need to be outlined to make all employees aware of which types of behavior are and are not acceptable.

8.1   Conduct

Companies should establish standards for acceptable personal and work behavior, as well as disciplinary procedures for violations, in order to promote a professional and ethical work environment.

- The ethics policy of this firm makes it clear to our staff members that meeting profit, quality, and client service goals does not justify unethical or illegal behavior. The following guidelines have been established for all staff members. They are fundamental in character and are designed for the convenience and protection of everyone. Breaches of these guidelines can result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

- As a staff member of a reputable professional service firm, it is important when dealing with or appearing before clients and the public that staff members conduct themselves in a manner that reflects credit upon all staff members and the firm.

- The reputation of the company has been built on excellent service and quality work. To maintain this reputation requires the active participation of every employee. The opinions and attitudes that clients have toward our company may be determined for a long period of time by the actions of one employee. It is sometimes easy to take a client for granted and treat them discourteously, but when we do, we run the risk of losing not only that client but also his or her associates, friends, or family who may also be clients or prospective clients.

- You also deserve to be treated with the same courtesy. If an employee or a client does not treat you properly, in word or action, please report this discourteous behavior to your supervisor, human resources, or to the company president. Each employee must be sensitive to the importance of providing courteous treatment in all working relationships.

- Disciplinary action may include a verbal warning, written warning, suspension without pay, or dismissal. The firm will determine the appropriate disciplinary action imposed. We do not guarantee that one form of action will necessarily precede another.

- The following is a partial list of behaviors that may result in disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal: Excessive absence or tardiness, violation of company policy, divulging confidential information, violation of safety regulations, violation of drug and alcohol policy, job abandonment, negligence, dishonesty, theft, verbal, physical, or electronic harassment, vandalism, and any act of violence.

8.2   Grievances

Most firms have formal, though usually simple, procedure to handle employee grievances.

- It is the policy of the company that any employee should be free to discuss any matter relative to his or her job with any member of management personally or by letter, without fear of punishment or recrimination. An individual will ordinarily look to his or her supervisor for consultation first, and most problems will naturally be resolved at that point. However, if any employee wishes to discuss a matter with someone other than his or her immediate supervisor, the employee may consult the next level of management.

9.1   Safety in the Workplace

Making employees feel safe in their work environment is essential. It is also vital for firms to make workers aware of emergency procedures, should an emergency arise.

9.1   *Personal Safety*

Employees' personal safety should be held in the highest regard and safety procedures must be clearly outlined and available for review.

- To assist in providing a safe and healthful work environment for employees, clients, and visitors, we have established a workplace safety program. This program is a top priority for the company. The HR director has responsibility for implementing, administering, monitoring, and evaluating the safety program. Its success depends on the alertness and personal commitment of all.

- Some of the best safety improvement ideas come from employees. Those with ideas, concerns, or suggestions for improved safety in the workplace are encouraged to raise them with the general manager. Reports and concerns about workplace safety issues may be made anonymously if the employee wishes. All reports can be made without fear of reprisal.

- Each employee is expected to obey safety rules and to exercise caution in all work activities. Employees must immediately report any unsafe condition to the general manager. Employees who violate safety standards, who cause hazardous or dangerous situations, or who fail to report or, where appropriate, remedy such situations, may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

9.2   Emergency Situations

Firms' policies on emergencies are most likely to refer to fires, but should be applicable to other potential emergencies as well.

- Notify your supervisor of any emergency.

- The firm participates in an office safety program in conjunction with the building management. The building management will conduct periodic safety drills.

10.1   Professional Development

For employees to grow, they need to have opportunities to learn and be challenged. Firms that offer training and education are not only reaping the benefits of more knowledgeable staff, but are also providing employees with a reason to look forward to their growth and career with their employer.

10.1   Professional Registration

Since professional registration or licensing is a prerequisite for the vast majority of professional engineering and architecture services, it is expected for firms to have a policy regarding who should be registered and for which types of work. Most employers pay for employee registration exams and registration fees.

- The firm encourages all eligible staff members to obtain their professional licenses, registrations, or certificates at the earliest opportunity, regardless of present assignment.

- The firm will assist employees in their professional development through: Financial support of employee requests for initial licensing/registration/certification; license or certification renewal; paid study and examination time; and the maintenance of a self-study preparatory library.

- All registered engineers and architects are expected to keep their professional registration current.

- Employees requesting licensing, registration, or certification support must obtain advance approval. Employees requesting licensing examination, registration, or certification reimbursement must present notification of a passing grade at the time reimbursement is requested.

10.2   Seminars and Conferences

Sending employees to seminars and conferences serves multiple purposes. It furthers their education and knowledge of their field; allows them to return with new information to spread to their peers; and helps them keep up with the necessary education requirements to maintain professional registration.

- All employees are encouraged to continue their professional development through educational courses. This includes continuing education courses, seminars, and workshops offered through professional societies. Information about available educational programs will be circulated throughout the office periodically.

- Seminars and conferences dealing with subject matter beneficial to our practice are available nationally. Approval for time off and the incurred expenses involved will be handled on an individual, event-by-event basis. Supervisors should be contacted regarding current availability of seminars and conferences.

11.1   Information Technology

As technology continues to reach new frontiers, it is crucial that firms adhere to professional standards and implement policies to prevent abuse by employees.

11.1   Computers

Many firms spend a large portion of their IT budget investing in state-of-the-art equipment for their employees. It makes sense to adopt policies clearly stating the computers and other equipment are company-owned property.

- The company computer network and laptop computers are intended for business use only. Only licensed software approved by the company is allowed on these machines. The company may destroy any inappropriate items found on these systems without notice.

- Computers, computer files, the e-mail system, and software furnished to employees are company property intended for business use. Employees should not use a password, access a file, or retrieve any stored communication without authorization. To ensure compliance with this policy, computer and e-mail usage may be monitored.

11.2   Software Licensing

Sometimes software piracy is the result of employees copying programs from the network. Firms are ultimately responsible for ethical use of software licenses so it is important to have policies that make this distinction clear.

- Only approved software may be used. Employees may only use legally purchased and licensed software when conducting the company's business, following the terms of the license agreement issued by the software vendor. Only software licensed as outlined above may be installed and used on company-owned computers.

- The company will acquire software licenses for all approved software products, as required by the vendor's license agreements, to accommodate the number of company workstations with each software product. The company policy forbids the use of illegally copied software.

11.3 Email

Though email has become one of the most prevalent means of communication in business today, it does have its complications. From virus protocols and SPAM to employee misuse and the difficulty of maintaining firm-wide consistency of communication, firms need to make sure employees are aware of standard protocols regarding internal and external email.

- The company e-mail system is community property. All messages, which are sent or received on a company's e-mail system, are the property of the company. However, incidental personal use of the company e-mail system will be allowed, subject to the approval and discretion of the company. Employees should not expect any such communications to be private.

- Employees shall refrain from using vulgarities, sarcasm, or exaggeration in electronic mail messages. Offensive, demeaning, or disruptive messages are prohibited. This includes, but is not limited to, messages that are inconsistent with our firm policies.

- E-mail may not be used to solicit others for commercial ventures, religious, or political causes, outside organizations, or other non-business matters.

- While it is not our intention to invade the privacy of our employees, this type of monitoring is important to the security of our computer systems and our business. Please take note that since we will be monitoring your Internet and e-mail usage, you should not use e-mail or the Internet for personal communications, particularly those that would embarrass you if reviewed by management, or which, for any reason, you would prefer to keep private.

11.4 Internet Usage

With widespread availability of personal computers with internet access, there is a greater likelihood that internet abuse will occur among some employees. With clear policies regarding who has access and for what purposes, along with specific protocols regarding viruses and downloading files, firms have a better chance at protecting themselves from potential internet misuse.

- The firm encourages employees to use the Internet to exchange information with clients and other project team members to improve communications and to carry out business when such business can be accomplished consistent with the firm's internet policies and guidelines.

- Business conducted via the internet should meet or exceed the standards of professionalism for traditional methods (such as meetings, use of telephone).

- You are responsible for the security of your account password and you will be responsible for all use of your account. You must maintain secure passwords and never use an account assigned to another user. The representation of yourself as someone else— real or fictional— or a message sent anonymously is prohibited.

2.   JOB DESCRIPTIONS

2.1   Job or Position Descriptions

Job descriptions are lists of the general tasks, or functions, and responsibilities of a certain position. Typically, they also include to whom the position reports, specifications such as the qualifications needed by the person in the job, and salary range for the position. Job descriptions are usually developed by conducting a job analysis, which includes examining

the tasks and sequences of tasks necessary to perform that job. The analysis also looks at the areas of knowledge and skills needed by the candidate in that position. A role is the set of responsibilities or expected results associated with a position. A position or job usually may include several roles.

2.1   Establishing and Using Job Descriptions

Typically, job descriptions are used for advertising to fill an open position, determining compensation, and as a basis for performance reviews. Without written or published job descriptions, these tasks become difficult, if not impossible to do effectively.

- When no current job descriptions exist, it is advisable that HR work with managers to write descriptions fitting the positions within the firm.

- It is possible to have too few descriptions as well as too many. It is recommended that job families be created where job descriptions may fall into place under general umbrellas of positions. For example, engineering, architecture, interior designer, administrative, and environmental scientists are typically listed as job families.

- The manager and HR point person then write more specific descriptions for categories of employees that fall under these umbrellas. There should not be a description for every employee in the firm.

- The temptation exists to make job descriptions as specific as possible to suit a particular candidate. General descriptions are recommended and are expanded upon, as goals are set between the employee and the supervisor.

- Job descriptions should be reviewed and updated on a yearly basis as firm needs, position criteria, and industry advancements are made.

- An example of a job description is attached at the end of this document for reference.

2.2   Availability of Job Descriptions

Since all employees are reviewed based on their job description benchmark, it is essential these descriptions are available firm wide.

- All potential candidates should be interviewed and assessed from a job description. Once hired, the new employee should discuss the description and other expectations with his or her supervisor and discuss potential gaps or areas where the employee exceeds requirements. This sets up the clear expectations for the employee in that position.

- Likewise all current employees should have access to or keep hold of the job description applicable to their position. It should be used during review conversations and any discussion regarding promotion to the next level of description.

- Job descriptions are particularly important for career tracking—as employees want to know what is required to move to the next level in the firm. Without adequate job descriptions to inform the employee and the supervisor, this conversation becomes difficult and misguided. Having all job descriptions available on the firm's intranet or posted on a system such as SharePoint allow employees access to this information and give them greater autonomy in their career tracking.

2.3   Best Practices

These are best practices employed by architecture and engineering firms in the industry:

- Position descriptions are revised or rewritten when there is a large organizational change, when the only incumbent in the position leaves the firm, when there are continuous problems in a division or unit, or a strategic change prompts a change in essential functions.

- Most job descriptions contain a brief narrative of the position and its general characteristics, essential functions and responsibilities, accountabilities, reporting lines, and any specific job specifications.

- It is important to call out the critical elements that differentiate between successful and unsuccessful job performance.

- Keep the process and description as simple as possible. Most firms have too many descriptions and spend too much time refining word choice.

- Use professional association descriptions as a guideline. The licensed professionals who perform these duties and tasks write these. Their information is useful and a practical base from which to get started.

3.   CODE OF ETHICS

Most firms do not write a separate code of ethics for their organization. The policies, procedures, and behaviors that management deems ethical are reflected in the general policies and procedures as represented above. It is broadly assumed that firms are ethical in their business practices with clients and among employees. It is also broadly perceived that firms with a pronounced code of ethics have had severe issues in the past with ethical situations and are specifically addressing those with a written code.

CHAPTER 3

HRIS SYSTEMS

1.   GETTING STARTED

1.1   Getting Started

As with anything else, determining the need for and ability to implement an HRIS system will depend largely on senior management's approval. It is also important to consider size of the firm and what needs to be accomplished. It is not just the mere cost of the software that is incurred. Customization, implementation, training, upgrades, and maintenance are also very expensive.

1.1   Purpose

An effective HRIS should be able to provide and track all the information a company needs on current and former employees. Storing, using, and managing this information serves as the foundation for strategic activities and better decision making. Integrating work processes within the HR group via an HRIS system also streamlines the way work is performed. The right HRIS should be reducing the workload an HR staff undertakes and help them be more efficient and productive.

1.2   Typical Usage

Typical HRIS tools architecture and engineering firms will use to execute and administer HR services include:

- Human Resources: track employee data

- Benefits: track health and other firm plans

- Training: track required training programs for specific candidates and jobs

- Recruiting: track applicants and the requisition process

- Attendance: track accrued time for sick and holiday leave

- Payroll: process payroll

Some advanced features include:

- Employee self-service

- Performance evaluation management

- Online benefits administration

Because of cost restrictions or legacy systems used internally, many firms will complement a vendor-provided system with databases and other tools that have been used with success over time.

1.3   Assessing Systems

Determining and prioritizing functions of the system that the HR group requires should be a detailed process that contains both functional and technical considerations. Once these

questions are answered strategically and with confidence, they build the business case for the firm to invest in the system.

Functional Requirements:

- Who will use the system and what is their skill level?
- What is the main purpose of the system?
- What are the critical features we need?
- What features are nice to have but could live without?
- Will the system produce the reports we need?
- Can it integrate with other HRIS, payroll, or accounting systems?
- What is our budget for this at implementation and then on a yearly basis?
- What customer service assistance is available and what do those service agreements cost?

Technical Requirements:

HRIS packages can be deployed through different technologies. It is important to choose which method is right for the firm.

- Application Service Provider: The vendor hosts the software and the firm's data remotely on the vendor server. This option is preferred when IT resources and support are limited. These agreements may offer a low cost initially but the monthly fee over time may cost more.
- Client Server Based: The firm buys an HRIS license and the software is hosted on the firm server. This option typically involves a one-time purchase fee plus an annual support fee.
- Web-Based: This is similar to the Client Server option but the applications are deployed and accessed through a browser.

Assessing and choosing a HRIS system that is right for the firm should be done very carefully since it is a strategic decision and will be only made once. Part of the assessment phase should include a full evaluation and demonstration of the system as well as interviews with the software representative. With any large purchase, the CFO should be made part of this process, as should the IT department.

2.   SYSTEM IMPLEMENTATION

2.1   Getting Started

There are four activities undertaken during implementation of an HRIS system: configuring the system for the group's processes and policies, interfacing the system with other systems, converting and entering historic data into the new system, and preparing the group or user for the new software tools.

2.1   Mapping Processes

The HRIS system comes with built-in tools and processes but these still require a certain level of customization to ensure the processes are run according to the group's needs. This does not necessarily involve programming; but does include entering specific data into control tables that then direct how the HRIS operates. This configuration requires that the HRIS user fully understand the firm's business processes and policies as well as the HRIS itself well enough to encode that logic into the HRIS. This effort should consider the following:

- Process mapping is usually a team effort by the HR user and someone from the IT group and can be a very lengthy and complicated process requiring full time dedication to it. For the HR team member, primary HR responsibilities are often shifted to others during the implementation phase so the focus can remain on getting the system up and running.

- Internal teams assigned to the project must have the skills needed for this project— such as analysis since this phase of implementation requires assessing what is done in the group and how it is translated into an automated system. Another option is to use external consultants and contractors with this experience.

- When firms switch over to an HRIS system and engage in process mapping, a fair amount of reengineering of those processes takes place. As a firm documents, analyses, and uncovers its true business processes, it is common for the firm to take time to improve them, or at least integrate the processes across departments. The integrated nature of most HRIS packages drives this activity.

- Most HRIS software tools do not handle exception cases very well. This often pushes the project team into generalizing many processes or categories so they fit the system. This is an opportunity to establish standards and eliminate legacy agreements. A change of this nature may be controversial to many—and this is why it is essential that senior management take a hard stance to support this effort.

2.2   Interfacing with Other Systems and Data Conversion

An HRIS system cannot run on empty and has to have historical and current information entered so it has a starting point from which to operate. The important points here in this phase of implementation include:

- As the team begins mapping historical data to the new system, they may find that the existing data contains a significant number of invalid, incomplete, or contradictory information. This is especially true when combining data from several existing systems. The new HRIS may also demand more complete or accurate employee data before it can function as designed.

- Making sense of data conversion problems is a skill required of the HR staff person—not a programmer or IT team member. Interfacing and data entry are not solely technical activities—end user preferences and consultation are required. Only the HR end user can make those determinations.

- Often data taken from legacy systems and models is not compatible in the transfer to a new HRIS system. Therefore, a great deal of time and effort is spent manually entering data and mapping historical information. One should not underestimate the time required to convert the systems and enter the information the HRIS requires to perform optimally. During this phase, it will become evident how many areas of the firm rely on employee data. This phase may raise questions concerning employee privacy as well as increase the volume of interfacing that will have to take place.

2.3 Preparing the Group for the new System

Implementing a new HRIS system is much more complicated than many firms realize. Even once the software is up and running and filled with the information needed to operate, an entire cultural adoption of the system is now required. Preparing the group for the new system and getting the team to use it to the fullest capacity require the following steps.

- Implementation of a new HRIS system requires HR managers to become highly involved in what is initially perceived as an IT project. They may be accustomed to pushing responsibility for such projects onto IT managers, but implementing an integrated HRIS requires HR manager participation and active involvement in scoping, implementation, conversion, and management. This requires a very skilled and attentive HR manager.

- Although HRIS systems claim to be user-friendly, they are still very sophisticated tools in terms of functionality and usage and therefore a more analytical user will have success using the system. In most companies, a certain portion of users will be able to make the jump to analytical thinking while others will not—even with training. This can be a difficult consequence to accept for many firms but given the price paid for a new system, it is a change that has to be made.

- One of the implications or benefits of implementing an HRIS system are that departments and team members become more integrated and centralized. This may cause tension across some team members that traditionally have kept information concealed from other departments or entities. Sharing information benefits the HR group and assists in making better decisions for the firm it serves.

3. 1 MISTAKES TO AVOID

Before investing in an HRIS system, it is important to consider the areas where firms commonly make some mistakes.

- Many firms invest in systems that do too much and are too large for the size of the firm. Consequently, a great deal of money is spent for tools that are complicated to learn and are never used.

- Many firms have developed spreadsheets and internal tools that have worked well for them over time. Not all firms necessarily have to have a vendor-provided system in place. Having hybrid tools developed internally qualify as the firm's "HRIS systems".

- Validate with the IT department that the firm's system can support the new software and that all technical requirements can be easily satisfied.

- Often HR teams fail to estimate the time and effort required to enter data into the HRIS to get it started. Staffing it as a "part-time" project means that it is often placed last on a priority list while primary HR duties are addressed. Staffing the project in this manner stretches out the completion date.

- Support from executive management is the first step to ensure new business processes are implemented effectively, funding the project is guaranteed, and for allowing appropriate staffing for the project. Without this support, the implementation of the new HRIS will be compromised.

- Sometimes full adoption, integration, and conversion of an HRIS can take years. Success depends largely upon resources dedicated to the project and the complexity of the processes within the department. Senior leadership and other managers can easily become disillusioned with the new system if it is not up and running immediately. Like any project, it is essential they, as sponsors of it, understand the time commitment required of this endeavor.

APPENDIX

JOB DESCRIPTION

Sample

JOB TITLE: Electrical Engineer	**PREPARED BY:**
JOB FAMILY:	**PREPARED DATE:**
SALARY CLASSIFICATION:	**APPROVED BY:**
DIVISION:	**APPROVED DATE:**
DEPARTMENT:	
REPORTS TO:	

Summary: Independently performs a variety of assignments requiring the application of standard engineering techniques for a project or a specific technical discipline of a project. Exercises independent judgment in evaluating, selecting and applying standard design engineering techniques, procedures and criteria to make design adaptations and modifications. Assignments have clear and specific objectives and require the investigation of a limited number of variables.

Qualifications: To perform this job successfully, an individual must be able to perform each essential duty satisfactorily. The requirements listed below are representative of the knowledge, skill, and/or ability required. Reasonable accommodations may be made to enable individuals with disabilities to perform the essential functions.

Essential Duties:

1. Prepares drawings and performs calculations for a detailed segment of a project.
2. Prepares technical specifications for review and approval.
3. Evaluates contractor's and submittals to assure compliance with contract documents.
4. Reviews and approved design drawings for assigned segment of project.
5. Assists with development of design criteria and design control procedures.
6. Collaboratively uses judgment to determine adaptations in methods of non-routine aspects of assignments.
7. Assists in determining schedule and development of design budget and construction cost estimates.
8. Coordinates with other disciplines as directed by the Project Engineer.

Supervisory Responsibilities: Assigns tasks to and coordinates with entry-level engineers, technicians and administrative staff.

Education and/or Experience: Bachelor's degree in Engineering with 3-5 years of experience.

Training:

Special Skills: AutoCAD and/or Microstation.

Specialized Knowledge:

Certificates, Licenses, Registration:

Physical Demands: The physical demands described here are representative of those that must be met by an employee to successfully perform the essential functions of this job. Reasonable accommodations may be made to enable individuals with disabilities to perform the essential functions.

Ability to work 40 hours a week. Occasional travel. May visit the field.

Working Environment: The work environment characteristics described here are representative of those an employee may encounter while performing the essential functions of this job. Reasonable accommodations may be made to enable individuals with disabilities to perform the essential functions.

Typical office environment and field site environment.