Case Study One
Research in Motion. Managing Explosive Growth.

1. Overview /Introduction

The case is about a successful company that has to deal with the complexities and challenges of a globalized environment. The organization faces a number of SHRD issues arising from: a) the specificity of a rapidly changing industry (smartphone), b) the need to cope with significant growth through strategic and diversified sourcing and talent management and, c) align mergers and acquisitions to the HR strategy. Moreover, the growth has resulted in work pressure, which is further affected by lack of physical space and staffing needs concerns also middle management posts. The following analysis further describes the internal and external challenges. The main issue is identified and solutions proposed in the ensuing paragraphs along with an annexed action plan.

2. Environment Analysis

Internally, the recent growth and external competition have impacted upon the structures, the workload, and motivation and led the company to reconsider its strategy. Externally, the industry faces an increasing global demand particularly in the emerging economies, which calls for RIM’s penetration in markets like China and India. Scarcity of skilled talents is, along others, the most evident reflection of the changes in the external context. Speed in expanding the global reach is of essence considering competitive products available to consumers, and the need to reach out for skilled labor. The working culture is “Waterloo centered” and fosters flexibility. However, the existing culture needs to be aligned with external changes of a multicultural context with new set of skills required to remain competitive. Therefore, the analysis suggests that a misalignment exists between market’s demands and changes with RIM’s strategy and HR policies. This should prompt a scanning of the external environment (social, political, legal and economic) and an internal diagnosis to determine the right strategy for the required transformation. Presently, HR and organizational systems do not fit the recent changes in the industry. Some dimensions may be changed rapidly (e.g.: sourcing strategy), others, like culture may require long-term solutions.

3. Problem identification

Issue: sourcing and development of human capital. Globalization and new technologies have reduced skilled labor (Brockbank, 1997) and in a context of high competiveness, human capital development help companies to sustain productivity (Hitt, Hoskisson, Harrison, & Summers, 1994) through decentralization of the business and innovative recruitment strategies. However, sourcing and “going global” brings other issues such as technology copyright, cultural integration importantly the political, legal, economic challenges associated with opening subsidiaries in a foreign country. Moreover RIM faces staff
motivation, scarcity of middle managers, and insufficient integration of some merged companies. Addressing these issues strategically HR will add value to the business becoming a strategic partner and enabling the company to compete globally (Brockbank, 1999).

**4. Strategic solutions**

The above scenario requires an integrated change management process linked with business goals. In this transformation HR should engage and partner with the stakeholders so to ensure accountability, ownership, and strategic alignment of the change. The practical implementation should follow an analytical and systematic process of business context’s analysis, clear definition of senior management and HR roles and HR processes’ analysis, including recognition of resistances (Cristensen, 2006).

This multilevel approach requires a new culture and therefore a shift in competencies that should be modeled to and integrated with the new organizational requirements (Vakola, Soderquist & Prastacos, 2007). Focus on change management and skills development for senior and line managers would be critical to place HR as strategic business partner (Younger, Younger, & Thompson, 2011). However, cultural shift alone would not suffice. Other HR dimensions (interpersonal and organizational) are to be embedded in the change process (i.e. power and politics, resistances, strategic fit, problem-solving forums) (Moss-Kanter & Corn, 1994). This requires a proactive leadership that anticipates the ongoing global changes (Want, 2003).

Effective communication (Moss-Kanter, Stein, & Jick, 1993) consultation and engagement with union and employees (Kitchen & Daly, 2002) will facilitate the transformation and minimize the roadblocks (Judson, 1991). This enhances employee relations especially integrating new companies (Nguyen & Kleiner, 2003). Hiring expatriates at the HQ and sourcing in foreign countries will address scarcity of local labor. This has to be supported with development initiatives to integrate values and perceptions (Holden, 2001). Importantly, HR initiatives should be based upon data gathering and contextual analysis. Diagnosis would enable HR to assess organization readiness for the change (Christensen, 2006).

**5. Action Plan**

A detailed action plan is enclosed in Exhibit 1 and comprises four phases.

1. **Phase one.** Change process is presented to senior management, approved and resources allocated. A senior staff and the HR manager are identified as change agents. A senior staff will bring knowledge of internal mechanism and politics and will lead a team of change agents with strong interpersonal skills. A number of new staff will be recruited: recruitment officers, learning and development experts, a communication expert, and a
short-term consultant. At this stage HR carries processes and environment analysis.

2. **Phase two.** RIM should open subsidiaries and hire foreign labor and bring expatriates to its main HQ. This requires further environment scanning for an effective decentralization. Climate survey will provide other data, such as staff motivation). Engagement with union and employee continues. Learning and development strategy is defined to support the required shift in culture, as well as new talent sourcing and management approaches.

3. **Phase three.** The review of the recruitment processes, an expanded outreach and new initiatives (e.g. internships) will tackle the talent crisis. Comprehensive induction and socialization programs will ensure cultural integration. Also, HR will streamline selection processes in use and the unit will be professionalized with new recruitment experts. Cultural mindset and fine-tuning of the recruitment systems are among other key of success in transformation of multinational companies (Smith, 2003), particularly in those with strong focus on knowledge (Thite, 2004).

4. **Phase four.** Align the sourcing strategy to talent management by implementing flexible promotion policies to fasten career advancement. Supervisors will be training on staff management to remedy motivational issues. The HR unit will be further strengthened with on line trainings on staff development strategies. At this stage training effectiveness will be assessed through feedback and surveys, which allow an alignment with the learning and development plan (Watkin & Hubbard, 2003). This approach ensures a transformational strategy through analysis, identification and development of learning needs (Armstrong & Foley, 2003) with line managers as key for the success (Chartered Institute of Personnel Development [CIPD], 2007; Mindell, 1995). The four phases aim at re-positioning HR closer to the business needs, being more strategic by aligning vertically and horizontally HR policies and systems as proposed in Garavan’s model (Garavan, 2007).

**References.**


