

HRM Solution of Challenges in COVID-19 Pandemic – A Case Study of Amazon

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ABSTRACT

The high contagiousness and uncertainty of the pandemic have had a huge impact on the global economy and society. During this period, not only Amazon's business was affected, but its human resources management also encountered many challenges. The objective of this article is to give the recommended alternative for Amazon's training and development challenge. I have researched the impact of the pandemic on the training and development of Amazon, and pick up the challenge which is to conduct targeted training on employees' skills. The research has shown that there are two alternatives to solve the challenges Amazon encountered. After comparing the two, I choose to formulate training program according to ADDIE to conduct targeted training on employees' skills. In the implementation stage, Amazon use both the online-based training method and behavior modeling method to implement the program. Through the implementation of training program, Amazon trains employees and enables them to master the required skills, which will help the company to continue to innovate and deepen its digitalization development.

Keywords: Amazon group, COVID-19, challenges, alternatives, ADDIE, human resources management.

1. INTRODUCTION

Due to the pandemic, Amazon is facing various challenges in human resource management, which involves hiring, firing issues, compensation and benefits, training and development etc. The challenge I studied in this work is in relation to training and development, which is "To conduct targeted training on employees' skills".

The pandemic has not only drastically changed the job market, but also brought new job opportunities. Jonas Prising, CEO of Manpower, a human resources agency, said that it has shown that companies can promote transformation and digitization at an unprecedented speed and scale for the past nine months. This has allowed companies to change the category of talent recruitment in a short period of time. The Financial Times reported that employers believe that the pandemic has made people who can help companies promote digitalization, such as data analysts and app developers, become more needed [1]. It can be seen from this that the pandemic has caused a shift in the types of talents required by companies and a greater demand for technological talents.

Amazon has been committed to innovating in many fields such as e-commerce, cloud computing, smart devices, and logistics. As one of the first Internet companies in the world to dabble in machine learning and artificial intelligence technology, Amazon continues to explore and innovate in this field, such as personalized product recommendation, automated storage robots, "unmanned driving" supply chain, etc [2]. In order to continue to promote innovation, Amazon has always had a great demand for technical talents. The arrival of the pandemic will undoubtedly accelerate Amazon's digitalization process and increase its demand for technical talents.

In order to response to changes in the external employment environment and internal talent demand, Amazon can solve the demand for talents through recruitment in the short-term. But in the long-term, for such a conglomerate like Amazon that has relatively rich training resources and experience, conducting targeted technical skills training for employees can save more costs and is more beneficial to the company's long-term development. Therefore, the pandemic makes Amazon have the challenge to conduct targeted training on employees' skills.

1.1. Related Work

Since Peter F. Drucker proposed the concept of human resources in *Practice of Management* in 1954, there have been many new advances in modern human resource management theory, produced many new research results. Modern human resource management theory draws the research results of various related theories, resource dependence theory from political science, work cost theory from economics, enterprise strategy, institutionalization theory and human resource management theory from psychology, and unprecedented development.

Mohoney and Desktop have divided human resource management research into micro and macro research branches. Macroscopic Research on Human Resources management is conducted at the organizational level, focusing on the impact of human resource management practices on organizational performance. Microscopic human resource management research is functional - oriented, conducted at the individual level, mainly studying the impact of human resource management practice on the individual. Another dimension dividing human resources management research is the number of human resources management practices (single / composite).

In the last decade of the twentieth century, One of the most important changes in human resources management is to call human resources a strategic contributor to the organization, Human Resources Management is gradually moving forward to strategic human resources management. For human resources "strategy", some scholars view the nature of strategic human resource management as a "relationship", that is, human resource management practice and the relationship between system and organizational performance; Other scholars view the essence of strategic human resource management as an "adaptability", mainly includes internal adaptability (horizontal adaptability) and external adaptability (vertical adaptability), human resources management practices and adaptability between system and organizational competitive strategy.

Among the research methods of strategic human resource management, there are three more common research methods of strategic human resource management. The first is to consider the contribution of strategic human resources management to organizational performance, focusing on the impact of human resources management on organizational performance, the second is to consider HR strategic choices on the organization, and the third is to determine the level of adaptation between organizational strategy and human resource management practices and policies to consider the impact of these adaptations on organizational performance.

Economic globalization and management internationalization also enable many management

scholars to change the research direction from domestic and regional human resource management research to international human resource management research. In the past decade, the research on international human resource management theory and practice has developed greatly, and the international human resource management researchers have been arguing between the two centralized and decentralized management modes. Scholars with a centralized management mode believe that the key to international human resource management is to promote and apply the concept of being developed and successfully applied in the United States to the international scope. Scholars holding decentralized management models believe that international human resource management should develop different management methods according to different cultures. Ricks, Toyne and Martinez et al. noted that different aspects must be considered in international human resource management. In general, the differences between domestic human resource management research and international human resource management research are reflected in: on the one hand, international human resource management research should include several unique dimensions, paying attention to the mutual influence of different cultural concepts and social values, the applicability of management methods when one culture transforms to another culture, legal and economic differences, and different learning styles due to social and cultural differences. On the other hand, the complexity of transnational management operations and the need to employ employees of different nationalities are the main differences between domestic and international.

In recent years, international theory and practice of human resource management have focused on four areas: external employees, internal employees, and their career design; functions of international human resource management; unified model development of international human resource management process; cross - cultural management.

As we know, human resource management brings benefits and efficiency to the organization. But, how can measurements of human resources management be made? Husehid (1995) has been studying the relationship between human resources management and the financial position of its subsidiaries, and Lam and Wite have studied 14 manufacturing companies to link the financial benefits of the company. Although it is difficult to obtain the income of human resources management or the expenditure, it can get accurate calculation value, which shows that using simple ratio method to evaluate the benefits of human resources management of the organization is unrealistic, but also needs to study and develop other evaluation methods that can reflect the performance of enterprise human resources management.

The COVID - 19 epidemic has been put under some control, and its challenges to business management have

already begun, and this epidemic may be the best touchstone for personnel management [3]. The professional HR team has overwhelmed companies in the face of a disaster. Under the huge uncertainty, they strive to take the initiative to grasp the pace of the work. Under the epidemic, the government continued to postpone the resumption date from the central to local governments. This may be an unforgettable experience in this life. In this huge background of uncertainty, the professional HR team is still trying to actively grasp the pace of the work. On the Internet, the author has noticed that some HRs are always led by the nose by the situation. Whether in the face of government policy or the boss's directives, they are passive receivers, unconscious, even less professional ability to give constructive opinions to the boss, failed to become participants in the major decisions of the organization, but can only be an executor or a collaborator. However professional HR teams are quite the opposite. Whether it is policy collection, work planning adjustment, staff humanistic care, work scene optimization and adjustment, they are always looking for safer, high - quality and efficient work plans. They actively input all kinds of information, after careful analysis and judgment, and then actively output the suggestions, ideas and plans to the decision - making layer. If the survival of the enterprise is compared to a war, the professional HR team is the very important battle staff.

But the intensified labor conflict reveals a series of problems between the concept and reality of human resource management. Human resource management is the process of acquiring, developing, and managing human resources. The basic goal of enterprise human resource management is the harmonious labor relations and the improved employee satisfaction. Various realistic and potential labor conflicts have not only seriously deviated from this goal, but also have become the biggest risks and challenges facing corporate human resource management. The social and economic relationship between the laborer and the labor user to realize the labor process is usually called the individual labor relationship, the individual labor relationship is asymmetric, as a result of its strong position, the Workers' Party often had to endure harsh working conditions and exploitative wages imposed by the management, so the regulation of labor relations came into being.

In history, the study of labor relations or industrial relations once flourished in Europe and the United States, so it flourished in the prosperity of the trade union movement. The collective labor relations composed of the trade union as the main body has become the basic mode of labor relations adjustment, basically established the research paradigm of labor relations, that is, the labor union as the subject of collective labor relations research, emphasizing various social policies, legal factors jointly affect the operation of labor relations, and the operation effect of labor relations is formed by the trade union and

the main body of collective negotiation, tripartite mechanism, democratic participation and other institutional means. However, the collective labor relationship with the labor union as the main body is outside the socialized labor relationship of the enterprise. In a free - competitive society, investors compete with unions for workers with more humane human resource development management measures.

In dividing the development of human resource management, Gariddesler noted that the first stage of personnel management was to establish such a department to conduct the management of employee employment, dismissal, wages and welfare plans; the second stage of personnel management development emphasized the protection of the company and trade unions; national anti - discrimination legislation pushed personnel management to the third stage; and under the concept of improving employees as competitive advantage[4]. The basic modules of human resource management, such as power - sharing decision - making, incentive and compensation, strengthening training, position evaluation and improvement of communication channels, are gradually forming the basic concept of development and management under the competition pressure of trade unions and government regulation.

Under the labor relationship system where the freedom of association is fully guaranteed, the possibility to incorporate individual labor relations into collective labor relationship adjustment, trade unions have become important strategic choices of human resource management; national labor standard defined in the form of labor benchmark law and anti - discrimination legislation becomes the bottom line of labor relationship operation, and human resource management must prevent possible breakthroughs in the bottom line through system design. The development of human resources management is born in the operation of labor relations, especially the trade union and the government, the two means of external regulation of individual labor relations, to directly promote the management adjustment of individual labor relations from the inside. The external pressure of the collective labor relations system and the national compulsory legislation is the driving force for the gradual development and maturity of human resources management and its basic institutional environment. Therefore, even in the advanced human resource management, we must face the competition for employees possibly caused by national labor law enforcement and the trade union movement.

1.2. General Characteristics of Enterprise Growth and Human Resource Management

According to the theory of enterprise life cycle, the risk restriction factors and degrees affected by different growth stages are different. In order to ensure its healthy growth, the organization must carry out management

reform, and human resources management activities will become the key to the success or failure of enterprise reform. Therefore, in different stages of growth, the enterprise human resource management plays an important role in ensuring the smooth growth of the enterprise. The first growth stage is the gestation period. The enterprise of gestation period can not be called an enterprise in a strictly speaking sense, it is just a "idea" of entrepreneurs. The purpose is to create an environment in which the ideal of entrepreneurs can become a reality, that is, to start a business. However, the idea of starting a business alone is difficult to create a business. Therefore, the symbol of the gestation period is that the entrepreneur began to put his ideas into practice. To meet the needs of the future market, entrepreneurs or use mature technology and products to meet the existing market with strong extended needs in the existing market, or develop future market needs with unmaturing and popular technology. Its marketing target is neither consumer nor customer, but a business partner in seeking. Therefore, the behavior orientation of enterprises in the gestation period is restricted by technology, products and market demand respectively. In the gestation period, technical experts have a supreme position, entering the early stage of entrepreneurship, marketing departments and marketing experts have gradually become the main needs of enterprises. The gestation enterprise is the process of individual entrepreneurs or employing a different number of assistants to organize a business in a certain field. In a strict sense, there is no human resources management work at the enterprise level, and all the human resources management work is carried out around the individual ability and quality of entrepreneurs. However, this is the starting point of the human resource management and development work of the enterprise. It not only determines the length and success or failure of the gestation period, but also restricts the mode of human resource management and development in the future.

The second is the initial period. In the initial period of the enterprise, entrepreneurs changed from pregnant "freelance" to the formal organization of the enterprise. Entering the early stage of entrepreneurship, the newly established enterprises will inject a lot of capital for mass production. The product that enters the mass production stage after the initial test and pilot stage no longer has obstacles in the basic technology or core technology, and what is needed is the technological innovation process and innovation results of the product. This will determine whether the business can have the first pillar product. The process of technological innovation is the key link of technological commercialization, so it has become the basic task of scientific research and development work in the initial stage of the enterprise.

In order to successfully complete such a process, start-up enterprises should do two aspects in human resource management and development: establish a comprehensive team of research and developers, varying

degrees of labor and system integration to complete the commercialization process of the technology; production personnel need to match the technical requirements of the product, because most of the process innovation is often done by production experts and skilled workers or with their support. The status of high - quality skilled technicians and technicians is particularly important in the initial period of the enterprise, which often becomes the decisive factor in the location or even relocation of the enterprise. Therefore, the enterprise has been restricted by the strong external human resources conditions from the very beginning.

Secondly, the flow of cash is in a net outflow state. The initial period of the enterprise is manifested as the high investment period of the enterprise, and any uncertain risk factors will translate directly or indirectly into the increased demand for investment. In order to solve the cash trap in the initial period, there are three possible ways: First, accelerate the output process, strengthen product sales, and increase cash income. Therefore, the status of the enterprise marketing work and marketing personnel in the initial period will rise rapidly, and the outstanding marketing personnel are easy to become the heroes of the enterprise. Second, the increase of financing. Third, it is to replace cash expenditure as much as possible, especially in terms of remuneration expenditure of employees. In the initial period, enterprises often replace high salaries with equity, future earnings or future corporate positions to attract high - quality employees.

The third growth stage is the growth of the enterprise. With process and performance and marketing work, products are gradually accepted by consumers. Sales and profits increased simultaneously, and the steady net cash inflow began, which shows that the enterprise has stepped up to the growth stage. At the same time, the scale of the enterprise and the staff team are also rapidly expanding, resulting in the requirements of authorization and control and other management level and some unique management phenomena. First, the absolute authority of entrepreneurs as an enterprise leader, its corresponding social status has been unprecedented established.

Second, due to the continuous growth of business brought the expansion of the enterprise scale and the increase of employees, the division of labor within the enterprise began to refine, and the management level began to fission, thus appearing the requirements of authorization and control. Therefore, the normalization of enterprise organizational structure become stronger and stronger.

Third, the workforce of growing companies began to show signs of differentiation. On the one hand, the team of technicians and marketing personnel began to form a system; on the other hand, due to the expansion of the business, the companies will introduce a large number of scientific research, management and make the new and

old staff points. While the establishment and improvement of the formal organization of the enterprise, the informal organization also began to be formed due to the stratification of employees. In the formation of the overall culture of the enterprise, the form of subculture is also brewing. In the growth period changes into human resource constraints, especially senior management, marketing, finance, financial and scientific research talents[2]. In order to attract such senior talents to join, enterprises have to provide rich wages and treatment conditions. The old employees have a more complex attitude towards this move. From a rational perspective of view, they also want these senior talents to join the enterprise in order to maintain the development and leading position of the enterprise, but from the perceptual perspective, it is difficult for them to agree with the generous treatment provided for this kind of personnel. Corporate leaders or decision makers will face a dilemma, they must fully consider the mentality of old employees because of their shared friendship, and rationally considering the development and future of the enterprise to venture with new people. Therefore, the emotional tendency or rational tendency of the decision makers will influence the choice of the enterprise growth stage. If the emotional factors prevail, the enterprise will experience a long period; while the rational factors prevail, and the enterprise may enter the mature period as soon as possible.

Finally, it reached its maturity period. Like Amazon, mature enterprises get rid of the shackles of the product life cycle and form a continuous follow - up product support system. The main feature is: First, a complete team of scientific and technological personnel. That is, the enterprise has a variety of technical personnel around its core technology and core product development and its success to the market. Second, a complete scientific research and development system. The mature enterprise must form and have its own core technology, so as to form the core competitiveness of the enterprise. Mature enterprise has formed a code of conduct based on values. And mature enterprise also has a positive vitality of corporate culture, which determines the dominant position of innovation spirit in the construction of enterprise culture, and marks that an enterprise has the basic elements of a mature enterprise.

Enterprises in the mature period must need to carry out the management and development of human resources according to the basic characteristics of the enterprise. For example: according to the current characteristics, conditions and means of the enterprise, timely carry out the flat and flexible reform of the organizational structure of the enterprise; strive to transform the enterprise and employees to learning organizations and learning employees as soon as possible; timely adjust the employee assessment methods and standards, improve the employee compensation and incentive means. Therefore, the mature period of enterprise human resources management focus should be

to fully mobilize the enthusiasm and creativity of all the employees of the enterprise, so that the potential of employees to get the maximum play[5].

These characteristics of enterprises in the individual development stage put forward special requirements for human resource management activities. In this stage, the enterprise first needs to identify and measure the composition of the existing human resources based on the characteristics of the competitive advantage (whether it is a sustainable competitive advantage), thus guiding the employee selection, salary management and training activities can contribute to the needs of future diversified development. In addition, in the future, diversified enterprises must need a lot of management talents, which is what the enterprises at the present stage lack.

1.3. Paper Structure

Firstly, the paper studies on the development of human resource management and the characteristics and methods of human resource management of mature enterprises. Then the author provides an overview of the characteristics of corporate growth and human resource management. The later section expounds the background and the general situation of Amazon and combines with Amazon cases to propose appropriate recommendations to improve human resource management.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1. Research Background

Amazon is the online retailer with the largest variety of products in the world and the second largest Internet conglomerate company in the world. Under the conglomerate 's name, it also includes subsidiaries such as AlexaInternet, a9, lab126, and Internet Movie Database. Amazon is involved in streaming video, hardware and cloud computing. Therefore it has diversified businesses including e-commerce, cloud computing, online grocery delivery and Whole Foods supermarkets. Its products include Kindle e-readers and smart speakers, etc.

The study of Amazon is conducted in the background of covid 19 pandemic, which is a major public health crisis once in a century, and its high degree of contagion and uncertainty have caused serious economic and social impacts. Companies in different industries are affected to varying degrees, and Amazon is no exception.

2.2. Impact to Amazon

The pandemic has both positive and negative impact on Amazon. For the positive side, people reduce the frequency of going out shopping and rely more on online shopping, which has led to a rapid increase in the order volume of Amazon's e-commerce business. Amazon's orders in the United States are expected to grow by 10%-

12%. Consumers bought more goods online, adding at least \$800 million in revenue to the company every month. In addition, people's demand for Amazon's streaming media entertainment products has also grown. People spend more time at home because of the pandemic, and they spend money watching Amazon's streaming media programs and movies to pass the time.

The pandemic also have negative impact on Amazon's business. Sales in other physical retail stores of Amazon were affected. It currently operates more than 30 Amazon bookstores in the United States, many of which are located in cities that restrict social distance such as New York City, Seattle, and Washington. Besides, Amazon's original content development is being greatly affected. Amazon Studios, the company's television and film production unit, temporarily suspended the production of all Amazon's original TV series in order to provide safe social distance for its actors and staff.

3. ALTERNATIVES EVALUATION

There are two alternatives to solve the challenge. The first alternative is to formulate a targeted skill training program according to the five steps training process (ADDIE). The second alternative is to outsourcing the training tasks to a third-party organization that specializes in employee skills training.

Due to the pandemic, most training program have no choice but to conduct online to ensure the health and safety of the employee. Therefore, the outsourcing of the training tasks need to be based on the cloud technology. The advantage of this alternative is that vendor will help companies host courses and learning management system and companies do not need to set up or update programs. But this advantage is not attractive to Amazon since it have its own cloud computing business called Amazon Web Services to help Amazon build the training management system and Amazon has relatively rich curriculum training resources and experience.

Thus, outsourcing the training tasks is not cost-effective for Amazon. And therefore, the first alternative is more suitable to it, because Amazon already has a professional training system and resource, which is no need to spend extra money to use the vendor's system. Besides, the training content formulated by itself will be closer to the company's own job skill requirement. Employees will be more easier to apply the skills to the work after learning the courses. Therefore, the first alternative will be chosen to study in this paper.

4. IMPLEMENT OF THE ALTERNATIVE IN RECOMMENDATION

4.1. Analyze the Training Need

This step should be a comprehensive analysis of the audience, training objectives, training methods used, and

media types used, etc. It is clear that the training aims to help the Amazon employee to build up new skills that the company needs and apply the skills to the job. So the first we need to do is audience analysis. We need to know the employees' background and characteristics. For example, like what the employee have already known? This analysis will help us to better train them. Then we need to do the task analysis. Through the detailed analysis of the job to know and list what specific skills and knowledge needed to finish the job. We also can refer to the job description and job specifications. In this way, we know the rough content of the training program. Suppose we need to develop a data analysis skills training program. In audience analysis, we understand employees' personalities, positions, their understanding of data analysis, what they hope to learn, etc. In task analysis, we analyse the job description of Amazon data analysts and know that the abilities to use Excel, Python and SQL are required.

4.2. Design the Training Program

Design refers to the planning of the entire training plan, including training objectives, implementation methods and training plan evaluation. The analysis of the first step is to help us build the training objective, goal and desired measurable outcome in this step, and help us to determine the time arrangement of the course, the department involved, the delivery method (recorded videos or recorded audios), training tool (books or animations) and so on.

In this step, it is important for the trainers to create an incentive environment. Trainers need to make the learning meaningful and provide adequate practice to reinforce the learning and ensure the trainees are easy to transfer the skills to the job.

4.3. Developing the Plan

In this step, we need to compile the training program's contents and materials. It means that to choose the teaching method (lectures or cases), training equipment and materials and trainer resource.

4.4. Implementing the Training Program

Once a training program is designed and developed, management can implement it and then evaluate it. In the implementation stage, to solve the challenges and get desired outcomes, Amazon use both the online-based training method and behavior modeling method to implement the program.

Based on the current condition of pandemic, Amazon can use the online-based training method to implement the training program. Amazon can use cloud technology to create a center to manage its online training academy, and the system is responsible for evaluating and

managing online training courses. According to the course plan, the trainers upload learning resources to the college, and regularly conducts online seminars. Quizzes and assignments are also assigned to test trainee's learning outcomes and whether they can apply the knowledge they learned to job. Trainees can learn via mobile devices anytime and anywhere according to the course schedule and give continuous course feedback.

In order to achieve the expected training benefits, Amazon can also use behavior modeling method together in the training process. Behavioral modeling is one of the most widely used, deeply researched, and highly valued psycho-based training interventions. Follow the steps of this method, trainees first watch the online video to know the right way to use the knowledge to solve the problem. Then the trainees play a role in a simulated situation to practice the way that the videos show to solve the problem. Next, the trainers will provide praise and constructive feedback to reinforce the learning. Finally, the trainers will encourage the trainees to transfer the skills to the job. Through the above series of steps, Amazon employees can get job-based learning and timely feedback, which helps them apply new skills at work.

4.5. Evaluating the Training Program

Evaluation is also an important part. The evaluation process is to measure the effectiveness of the training program through letting the trainees to complete the survey at the end of the program, which is to improve the deficiencies and provide advice to the design, development and implementation of the next iteration of the training program.

5. CONCLUSION

Some companies that build competitive advantages on capital elements, random diversification (unrelated diversification) will be a choice. At this time, the Group pays attention to short-term capital return, and maintaining the link between member enterprises is only a simple financial relationship. Each member has different industry backgrounds and corporate culture is very different. The Group headquarters implements laissez-faire management of each enterprise, only to control the performance. Therefore, the enterprises in random and diversified development may not have a complete overall human resource strategy, but the member enterprises may formulate their own human resources management policies according to their own development strategies and needs.

The Amazon's challenge that conduct targeted training on employees' skills is solved by formulating training program according to ADDIE. We first analysis the training need, then design and develop the training program. In the implementation stage, Amazon use both

the online-based training method and behavior modeling method to implement the program. Through the implementation of training program, Amazon train employee and enable them master required skills, which will be helpful for Amazon to deal with the changes in the external employment environment and internal talent demand.

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