

Call for Papers: Are HRM Processes Important?

Manuscript Submission Deadline: 31 May 2012

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The role of human resource management (HRM) in building sustainable competitive advantage has received much scholarly attention over the last three decades. Inspired by pioneering studies that empirically demonstrated significant relationships between HRM and firm performance (Combs, Yongmei, Hall, & Ketchen, 2006), scholars have examined the mediating mechanisms through which HRM practices make a difference in organizational outcomes. In their efforts to open the black box between HRM and firm performance, two general approaches are notable.

The first approach can be referred to as a *content based approach* ('best practices approach') in which researchers focus on the inherent virtues (or vices) attached to the content of HR practices. Although researchers have shown that several HR practices contribute to organizational performance and have tested different mediating effects, empirical research lacks consistency in its findings (Wood & Wall, 2005). It remains difficult to pronounce the conditions under which HR practices are (or are not) effective.

The second approach that emerged over the recent decade is what can be called as *process based approach*. Proponents of this view highlight the importance of the psychological processes through which employees attach meanings to HRM practices. According to this view, same HR practices may result in different individual or organizational outcomes if employees find it difficult to attach only one kind of meaning. Along this line of reasoning, Bowen and Ostroff (2004) argued that any inherent virtue attached to the content of HR practices cannot be fully realized unless such HR practices are delivered in a way that employees can perceive the HR practices as employers intended. Building on Kelley's (1967; see also Kelley & Michela, 1980) co-variation model of the attribution theory, Bowen and Ostroff (2004) further argued that in order for a company's HRM strategy to be effective, employees should be able to perceive HRM as *distinctive* (the event-effect is highly observable), *consistent* (the event-effect presents itself the same across modalities and time), and *consensual* (there is agreement among individual views of the event-effect relationship). When HRM is implemented in a way that satisfies these conditions, employees can clearly understand what behaviors are expected and will be rewarded by employers. Recent empirical studies such as by Nishii, Lepak, and Scheider (2008), Sanders, Dorenbosch and De Reuver (2008), Takeuchi, Lepak, Wang and Takeuchi (2009), Kehoe and Wright (in press), and Li, Frenkel and Sanders (2011) demonstrated the validity of this process-based view.

Although the process approach looks promising and suggests a new direction for HRM research, more research is needed to address at least three aspects. First, studies in which both *content* of HR practices and the *process* of employees' attribution are taken into account are lacking. Second the process approach is based on Kelley's attribution theory (1967; 1973). However, if we followed Kelley closely, this would lead to a different theoretical elaboration of the three features and different expectations regarding the effects of these features. Third there is no agreement yet about the question how to measure HRM strength (Delmotte, De Winne & Sels, in press; Gomes, Coelho, Correia, & Cunha, 2011).

For this special issue of HRM, we call for submissions that:

- Theoretically discuss the concept of HRM process (Kelley versus Bowen & Ostroff).
- Theoretically discuss why and how HRM process is related to individual and/or firm performance.
- Introduce instruments for measuring HRM process.
- Empirically examine the impact of HRM process on individual attitudes and behavior, on firm performance, on the implementation of HRM by line managers, etc.
- Empirically study the impact of the interaction between HRM content and HRM process on individual attitudes and behavior, on firm performance, on the implementation of HRM by line managers, etc.
- Bridge the gap between theory and practice by offering practical guidelines for managers for developing effective HRM processes.

References

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Manuscript Submission and Review

All papers must be based on original material and must not be under consideration by any other journal. Papers intended for the HR Science Forum will undergo a rigorous, double-blind review process to ensure relevance and quality. Papers suited for the HR Leadership Forum (more practitioner-focused pieces, case studies, interviews, etc.) will be single blind reviewed by subject matter experts. Please see HRM's Publishing Cues for a complete description of each section. Submitted papers must also follow the HRM Style and Format Guidelines, found at <http://www3.interscience.wiley.com/journal/32249/home/ForAuthors.html>.

The deadline for submitting papers is **31-May-2012**. Please direct all questions about content and ideas to the guest co-editors noted above. Direct all logistical questions about submissions and review to Managing Editor Leslie Wilhelm at lwilhelm@umich.edu or 734-748-9069.

Manuscripts must be submitted electronically using the Journal's web-based submission and review website called Manuscript Central: <http://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/hrm>. **Electronic submission through Manuscript Central is required.** Manuscript Central is configured to be very intuitive; therefore, you should have little difficulty creating an account and submitting your manuscript. The online system will guide you through each step of the process.

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In addition:

- Answer "Yes" to the question regarding special issue submission and clearly label your submission for the "**Special Issue on HRM Process**" in the text box provided.
- Include a paragraph in your cover letter specifically identifying how the paper fits within the special issue theme.