

BINDURA UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE EDUCATION
FACULTY OF COMMERCE
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF BUSINESS
MASTER OF BUSINESS LEADERSHIP
STRATEGIC HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT (MBL 525)
EXAMINATION PAPER
DURATION: 3 HOURS 30 MINUTES

NOV 2024

INSTRUCTIONS AND INFORMATION TO CANDIDATES

1. Section A is compulsory and carries 40 marks.
 2. Answer Question One from Section A and any three (3) questions from Section B.
 3. The paper carries six questions.
 4. All questions in Section B carry equal marks of 20 each.
 5. The use of cell phones is not allowed in the examination.
-

SECTION A: [COMPULSORY]

QUESTION 1

CASE STUDY: LEADERSHIP STRATEGIES IN TIMES OF CHALLENGES.

Pervading nearly every facet of our personal and professional lives, the impact of COVID-19 is made worse by the fact that there is no playbook for companies and their leaders to follow, including leaders who have successfully navigated quick and crashing waters in the past. Seemingly overnight, employers had to direct their workforces to work remotely as governments imposed widespread lockdowns in addition to other sanitary measures.

Many Fortune 500 companies and professional services firms that I work with are well versed in the tremendous impact of making decisions that are informed by big data and behavioral insights. Decision makers must now act swiftly and pragmatically, using data to help navigate financial, operational, and personnel challenges that lack clear resolutions. Leaders are being forced to make unprecedented decisions in the short term, knowing that these actions will lead to adjustments to their businesses, operations, people strategies, and plans in both the medium and long terms.

Several important insights emerged that confirmed that both managers and employees within the organization were facing difficulties. The pandemic was affecting their well-being and their anxiety levels, which runs counter to operating a highly functional organization, or what my colleague has termed a fearless organization.

The 2020 Edelman Trust Barometer survey found that employees in 10 countries see their employers as more trusted, reliable, and credible channels of information during the COVID-19 crisis than traditional media or government sources. One of my clients, a tenured CEO, invited me and my team of researchers on the journey to navigate COVID-19 by harnessing behavioral insights to support and manage workers through what is, one hopes, a temporary — albeit highly stressful — situation. Our work began with delving deeply into the analytics of the organization's workforce, and we paired this analysis with quick surveys to get an immediate pulse on how the company's employees were responding to the crisis. This approach allowed us to identify and drive new, data-informed priorities for the organization.

First, the company's employees wanted to know that their leadership had a clear action plan for the company. They were eager to receive communication from their CEO, leadership team, and managers about what was going on within the organization, their business units, and their teams. In other words, they wanted information about where the business was going, why it was headed there, and how leaders planned to get there together.

Second, the employees wanted to feel a sense of safety and security about the future of their jobs. This connected directly to a need for belonging and inclusivity within their organization and teams. Third, the employees wanted to be provided with the right information in a helpful way by the right person. Clarity, specificity, and context are important here. Employees wanted to know about changes caused by the coronavirus pandemic and what the company was doing to help — both through work policies and for communities at large. Setting clear expectations around priorities and boundaries is also important, given that people are working from home with competing responsibilities.

Finally, employees indicated that they wanted to feel that their organization cared about their well-being and that the company's expectations around productivity and billing would not be the same during this time. It's already a challenge to stay productive while balancing home, work, and the fear and anxiety of the changing environment. Added to that is the growing number of internal team meetings and videoconferences that have replaced canceled in-person meetings. Employees wanted their employer to understand that remote working, with no immediate end in sight, is testing their well-being and productivity in new and complicated ways.

Armed with the knowledge of employees' pain points, we designed several interventions, or what I call *inclusive vision nudges*. Inclusive vision refers to making employees and their contributions a cornerstone of the organization's future. One major component in conveying an inclusive vision is how leadership teams speak with their employees — including the format, language, and frequency of communication.

We divided the employees into groups to first test format and language. One group received an email, while another received a short video from the CEO and other members of the leadership team. Both groups were further randomly divided, and for these smaller groups, we modified the language used by the CEO and leadership. In one instance, the language used was more personal (using "I" and "me"), whereas the other used collective pronouns ("we" and "us"). Finally, we

further randomly divided the groups by modifying the frequency of communication, the third focus area of our nudge. Groups received the leadership messages once a week (Monday morning) or every other day (three times a week — Monday, Wednesday, and Friday).

Behavioral insights from employee feedback can help organizations identify and drive new, data-informed priorities. These findings are applicable to organizations of different shapes and sizes across industries. Here are four steps that CEOs and senior leaders can take right now.

- i. Check workforce well-being regularly.
- ii. Send regular messages to employees that emphasize “we” and “us.”
- iii. Staff should understand where to focus their time and energy, and
- iv. Encourage social interactions and highlight positivity.

Source: Adapted from Paola CD, 2018.

Required:

- a) What anxieties were caused by the Covid'29 to employees? (10 marks)
- b) Which are the leadership qualities that are best suitable during such Pandemic times? (10 marks)
- c) How would you collect behavioral information from the employees? (10 marks)
- d) How best could you support remote working environments for the employees. (10 marks)

[Total 40 marks]

SECTION B: Answer any three (3) questions from this section.

QUESTION 2

Evaluate the challenges of implementing Human Resource strategies for an organization you are familiar with.

[20 marks]

QUESTION 3

Explore how the Human Resource Management strategy supports the other organization's strategies. **[20 marks]**

QUESTION 4

Recommend the Human Resource Management strategy formulation process to a Small to Medium Enterprise in the retail sector of the economy. **[20 marks]**

QUESTION 5

Evaluate the challenges of the employment life cycle model of excellence for an organization you are familiar with. **[20 marks]**

QUESTION 6

Explore the importance of the Labour Act (Chapter 28:01) to Human Resources Management Functions. **[20 marks]**

END OF EXAMINATION QUESTION PAPER