

# Is Strategic Human Resource Management Worth Taking Seriously?



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# Yes – but..

Effective SHRM requires:

- A strategic vision of the HRM contribution
- A strategy for implementation
- An agreed role for the HR function

# The Traditional Strategic Approach

- Contribute to organizational goals by aiding effective management of the workforce
- Research has shown an association between more HRM and organizational performance in public and private sectors
- Leads to a focus on:
  - HR practices to promote AMO (ability, motivation, opportunity)
  - Prioritising key human capital through talent management
- But are the gains one-sided?
  - Research challenges extent of mutual gains
  - Growing concern for negative impact of work on employees
- Suggests the need for an alternative approach

# Outline of an Alternative Approach

(Good work – good working lives: CIPD)

## Conditions for a Positive Employment Relationship

Investing in employees  
Interesting work  
Positive social and physical environment  
Voice  
Organizational support

## Employee Outcomes

**Positive employment relationship**

trust  
fairness  
security  
psych contract  
high QWL

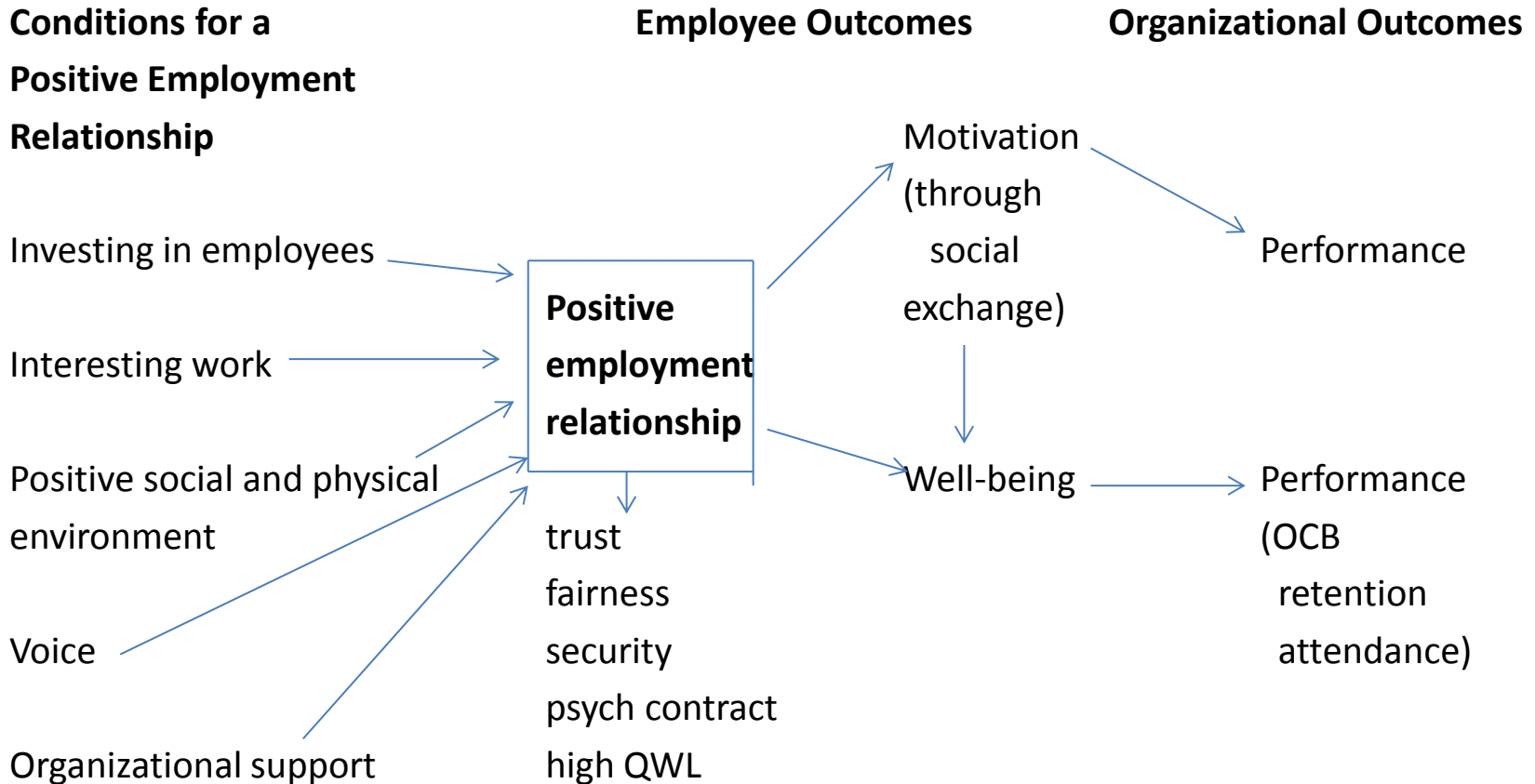
## Organizational Outcomes

Motivation  
(through social exchange)

Well-being

Performance

Performance  
(OCB  
retention  
attendance)



# The Range of Well-Being Oriented HR Practices

## Investing in Employees

recruitment and selection  
training and development  
***career support***

## Engaging work

autonomy, challenge and feedback  
skill utilisation

## Positive social and physical environment

***health and safety a priority***  
***required and optional social interaction***  
***zero-tolerance for bullying etc***  
***equal opportunities/diversity management***  
***fair collective rewards/high basic pay***  
employment security/***employability***

## Voice

two-way communication/employee surveys  
***collective representation***

## Organizational support

***participative/supportive management***  
***involvement climate***  
***flexible and family-friendly work arrangements***  
***participative developmental*** performance management

# The Implementation Challenge

- Invariably a gap between intended and implemented HRM
- Effective implementation requires:
  - Understanding of allocation of function between HR specialists and line managers (and consultants)
  - Sufficient support from all levels of line management
  - A highly skilled and credible HR function

# Getting Line Management on Board: The Case for a 'Strong' HR System

- Effectively implemented HRM requires the ownership by, and behavioural commitment to, the HR strategy
- Line managers implement the HR strategy so their commitment is especially important
- This is more likely where the top management are committed to a 'strong' HR system reflected in:
  - High consensus: agreement and support for HR strategy among key stakeholders
  - High distinctiveness: relevant, visible and understandable
  - High consistency: integrated HR policy and practice, fairly applied

# Getting Front Line Managers and Staff on Board: The Role of Signalling Theory

- The response to HR practices will depend on assumptions about why they are used.
- If it is signalled that they exist to benefit staff, they will get a positive response
- If staff believe they exploit staff or exist as rituals, they will be opposed or ignored.
- An important role of the HR function and senior management is to provide signals about the rationale for specific HR practices

# Getting the HR Function on Board

- The HR function has a chequered history as it seeks influence
- Choice of conformist or innovative strategy: usually the former
- Susceptible to fads and fashions as a means of influence and impact
  - The Ulrich model of HR structure
  - Engagement
  - HR analytics
- Need to operate effective business partner role at all levels
- Need to be braver in proposing a new employment relationship prioritising well-being as a route to performance

Thank you for listening

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