

Strategic Management and Human Resource Practices in Lenovo during COVID-19

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Executive Summary

During and after the time, the deadly pandemic COVID-19 hit the world, e-commerce businesses have adopted a distinctive approach of working from home that represents a significant transition in the operational and human resource management practices of the companies.

Businesses like Lenovo have seen this type of positive change occur, and the company shifted its emphasis from technology, procedures, and policies to safeguarding people while focusing on maximizing each employee's individual strengths during the time of global crisis.

The concepts of effective human resource management and strategic leadership explored within this assessment, while analyzing the human resource management approaches and leadership practices of the company, are playing the most crucial roles in transforming businesses from in-person to virtual spaces to drive them towards growth and sustainability.

Analysis of the HRM practices and leadership strategy of Lenovo, which designs, manufactures, and markets consumer electronics, smartphones, personal computers, workstations, and related services, can effectively create a deep insight into the contemporary business practices of the company. However, the identification of different distinctive HRM and strategic practices of the company has the potential to develop an understanding of developments for organizational growth in the future.

This report outlines the strategic approach and adaptations necessary to facilitate the transition, ensuring employee well-being and business continuity at the time of crisis during COVID-19.

Introduction

The global health crisis at the time of COVID-19 since 2019 has necessitated a re-evaluation of traditional work models. Embracing work-from-home arrangements for businesses can mitigate health risks while maintaining productivity and sustainability. In this regard, [strategic human resource management](#), as stated by Boon et al. (2018) signifies the process of future-oriented development of the organization, which is significantly important to enhancing growth and building sustainability of the organization in the rapidly changing business scenario. Therefore, the implementation of effective leadership strategies and the incorporation of strategic human resources that can align with organizational objectives allows the organization to focus on higher productivity in the competitive

business environment (Boon et al., 2018). The leadership strategies of the changing work environment of Lenovo business have made a significant impact in the market by giving a remote experience that feels local through the online mode. Apart from that, the in-depth assessment of the leadership strategies and human resource practices has the potential to create customer-centric approaches, which can enhance the overall understanding of the organizational changes in recent times in order to create a positive response among the customers. Moreover, the incorporation of evidential and theoretical approaches in the HRM and strategic practices of the company can influence the overall construction of business strategies of Lenovo that can foster the sustainability and growth of the business effectively. This also requires a comprehensive review of HRM activities to address the challenges and opportunities presented by remote work during and after the time of crisis.

Background of the Company

Lenovo, a computer maker group, was originally founded in 1984 in Beijing by Liu Chuanzhi and his colleagues. Initially, Lenovo started as a PC sales unit and later started selling personal computers under its own brand, and became the largest PC maker in the world. In 1985, Lenovo started manufacturing personal computers under the brand name ThinkPad, which helped it develop its name from a small government-funded venture based in Beijing, China, to a leading global manufacturer of PCs. In the year 2005, Lenovo's acquisition of IBM's famed PCD (Personal Computer Division) became the starting shot for Lenovo's transition from a domestic and radical mainland Chinese firm to a truly global and multinational corporation. Today, Lenovo is not just a personal computer maker but a "global technology powerhouse" that employs more than seventy-seven thousand people of different ethnicities and diverse backgrounds from around the world with the distinctive motto "Smarter Technology for All" to create a workforce diverse in talents and expertise ("About | Lenovo US," n.d.). Over the years, the company has been known for its excellent personal computers and related devices all over the world, generating revenue of approximately \$62 billion annually as it has evolved successfully from a regional PC player in China to a global business leader in intelligent transformation since IBM has sold its Personal Computer Division to Lenovo.

Literature Review

Role and Significance of Strategic HRM in Lenovo

Lenovo has embraced a hybrid work model while adapting to the changing work environment, diverting its focus mainly from the operational [policies to the safety](#) and well-being of its employees. The transition of Lenovo to a work-from-home model, which has become increasingly essential due to the COVID-19 crisis, includes maintaining a positive employee experience even when remote work was not the norm for many in recent years. To support this transition, the organization has been

thinking through the challenges the corporate world and in-person businesses face to offer solutions such as empowering employees to overcome challenges and improve productivity during remote work, as well as educating employees on new technology with online training that is tailored to different technical levels. Lenovo has also allowed its employees the flexibility to work from the comfort of their homes, with an option to spend three days in the office or at their workstations. This approach that Lenovo has adopted considers the need for transition, acknowledging the ongoing necessity for adaptability in work arrangements. Lenovo's initiatives and strategies for the work-from-home transition also support employees in balancing their personal and professional lives to the maximum potential they can. Thus, the rapid growth of Lenovo allows the organization to build effective positioning in the e-commerce realm.

The HR management of Lenovo signifies the issues and prospects through implementing effective and potential strategies in the company to create a positive impact in the broader sense. E-commerce organizations like Lenovo, which significantly focus on employee safety, customer experience, and delivery of best-possible products or services, need strong employee collaboration and performance to influence the development of the organization and create a competitive edge in the market. However, analyzing the effective human resource management approaches and strategic leadership practices of Lenovo has the potential to investigate the important dimensions of the company's practices in contemporary times. In this regard, the human resource management practices of the organization focus mainly on innovation and sustainability in the service offerings to create a collaborative approach in the workspace. Moreover, the HRM policies of Lenovo focus on enhancing the convenience and quality of the lives of the customers. The policies regarding human resource management, in order to create a workplace where change management and effective collaboration among employees are the mission statement of the organization, help put the company's focus on the adaptations due to changes in the overall business environment of the company (Bamberg and Schulte, 2018). However, the leadership of Lenovo emphasizes incorporating a highly productive workspace through the operational objectives of the organization and the efficient information management systems associated with the company. The HRM of the organization implements technology to set its operations and processing virtually due to the emergence of COVID-19, which has pushed the company to create effective service design and delivery of the products or services according to the changing market demand through online mode. Thus, the pandemic has created a scope for focusing on employee safety and overall well-being while aligning with the market demand through human resource policies and approaches in Lenovo.

Impact of Human Resource Management Activities on Lenovo's Performance

In the last decade, a significant focus has been developed and adopted by the organization on identifying the effective relationship between organizational performance and HR management in the changing business context. Theorists like Abraham Maslow have focused on the fact that

organizational performance is highly influenced by the management approaches” of the organization. However, organizations like Lenovo have created an essential performance-centric service to enhance employee engagement and ensure a higher degree of performance, which fosters human resource management in the business. According to Chaudhary (2020), a better human resource management strategy focuses on human motivation to create a highly motivated and performative work environment. This signifies the need for effective performance management and leadership strategies by the managers in the human resource department (Chaudhary, 2020).

The human resource practices of a business organization like Lenovo signify the applied policies and rules to create a higher degree of integrity and influence employee motivation as well as the overall well-being of the workers in the organizational environment. Apart from that, human resource policies also focus on creating dependency and trust among employees while ensuring the overall well-being of the employees in the workforce to drive a higher degree of performance in the business environment. Moreover, the development of customer-centric approaches based on the human resource practices of the organization enhances employee satisfaction and creates shared values as well as positive attitudes among individuals in the workforce that subsequently lead to organizational productivity. Lenovo’s strategy to enhance its performance can effectively manage its human resources to drive its success.

In the contemporary scenario, e-commerce organizations like Lenovo focus on contingent management through human resource strategies or practices to develop a collaborative workforce in order to create a significant competitive edge of driving a higher degree of performance and productivity in the workforce. Madera et al. (2017) state that managing the management attitude and employing human resource strategies in a positive way for organizational performance and productivity allows the company and its employees to “mitigate stress leading to a higher degree of employee performance in the workplace” (Madera et al., 2017). Collaborative performance and the workforce are important aspects of human resource management strategies. Therefore, Lenovo has been adapting to the new normal by focusing on the safety and well-being of its employee force during the global pandemic crisis. Effective human resource management roles and practices help shape the behavior and skills of people, which in turn motivates employees, involves individuals in decision-making, supports the mission of the departments, and ensures the fulfilment of the company’s goals (Anwar and Abdullah, 2021).

The company has innovated its human resource practices to align with corporate changes, which include remodeling the human resource practices and development team. The HR team of Lenovo focuses on adopting the organization’s 5P principle, including planning, performance, prioritization, practice, and pioneering to recruit internationalized talents, which is crucial for global operations. This would help the company to bring in new perspectives and approaches in order to diversify its workforce, which has adjusted the human resource management system of the company to integrate its workforce. Lenovo also provides cross-cultural training to senior human resource managers in order to significantly influence the performance of the company. This training is essential for avoiding conflicts in corporate culture during cross-border mergers and acquisitions to maintain a strong

performance in the global market. The human resource management of Lenovo aims to establish a caring management style for the employees that is more open and flexible to enhance performance and cultural integration in the fast-paced technology industry.

Suited Leadership Style for Lenovo

In the contemporary post-pandemic business world, the working culture has completely changed according to the new needs and preferences of human beings as well as workforces. People and companies have realized the importance of their lives and time and are more inclined towards connectedness, friendships, embracing diversity in the workplace, interpersonal relationships, and being a part of a larger group or business community. Thus, with the generation of these new needs and preferences, human resource management needs need to be fulfilled by Lenovo HR management, which can be achieved using the Hierarchy of Needs theory by Abraham Maslow. Kumar & Mishra (2020) shed light on Maslow's theory, which suggests that human beings are "driven by a hierarchy of needs," dividing them into five categories. The research highlights that when deficiency needs are fulfilled, the motivation to work decreases, but the motivation can be increased if the growth needs of the employees in the workforce are fulfilled. First and foremost, there are the psychological needs, which are about food, shelter, clothing, and warmth. The top priority of human beings is always "physical survivability," which includes food and shelter, but also a proper job to survive in society. Secondly, safety and security needs come into play, which include the wealth, social, financial, health, and legal needs of a being. This set of needs helps individuals gain control over their lives, which, when met, leads to the third category of hierarchical needs. Thirdly, the need for belongingness and love for community is one of the aspects of the theory of hierarchical needs. Fourthly, now arises the need for the desire for reputation, esteem of oneself, and the desire for respect from others in the workplace or the overall society. Lastly, there are certain needs for self-actualization, which provide individuals with the opportunity for self-fulfillment. This increases individuals' growth needs and their motivation to work at home (Kumar and Mishra, 2020).

Following this, transformational leadership, as evidenced by Sosik et al. (2018) and Weller et al. (2020) aims at shifting the mindset and beliefs, changing individuals' behavioral systems, and adaptation of habits and belief systems by the workers at the organization. This approach to leadership is aimed at developing skills and boosting the overall productivity of the work environment in order to enhance information management and time management available in virtual mode (Weller et al., 2020). According to Sosik et al. (2018), the leader at the organization needs to focus on the management skills of the employees, for which they need to emphasize training and coaching. For this, the leader must have massive influential skills for the "work-from-home policy" to maintain its focus in times of virtual assistance and [virtual team management](#) to the employees (Sosik et al., 2018). In this regard, the role of a leader at Lenovo can be improved through the transformational shift in their work and engraving a mission among the employees to align employee attitudes towards doing the assigned task at the workplace. For the one-year work-from-home policy, the leader in Lenovo must have these skills to understand employees' concerns while working to help develop

emotional intelligence in himself and his employees to create the mindset shift and thus delegate the work accordingly. In a company like Lenovo, transformational leadership can help shift the mindset of the employees to formulate a system that consistently boosts employees' motivation towards organizational goals (Asbari, 2020). It can also help Lenovo management to form an influential culture that causes a change in individual behavior to stimulate motivation continuously.

Furthermore, as mentioned in Maslow's "Hierarchy of Needs" theory, employees' motivation should be boosted, and employees' productivity should be leveraged to "overcome the issue of job retention" as seen during the pandemic through the easy application of the collaboration method among employees (Tahir and Iraqi, 2018). During this time, psychological needs have increased, which could possibly impact employees' productivity, as there are several layoffs taking place in the HR management of the company due to people working from home and the company not considering each employee individually. Therefore, the best-suited leadership style for Lenovo can be transformational leadership practice to develop the ability to understand and manage employees individually, as well as resolve organizational conflicts easily. Applying this style as the vice president of the human resource department in Lenovo would help the HR team to work better during high-pressure pandemic times when employees need to double their energy and effective communication flow to improve their productivity while they work from the comfort of their homes.

In the early days of the lockdown, employees at Lenovo were unable to work from home and convey their issues as they were underqualified to work from home or could not communicate effectively with the HRM department. This led to job losses and major financial loss to the company because of lower productivity and a negative mindset of hopelessness, which was developed during the time of lockdown. To boost employee motivation and organizational productivity, there is an urgent need for a transformational leadership style at Lenovo to turn the company towards hope and growth during the one-year period of work-from-home. Moreover, leaders of the Lenovo company must possess various skills, including problem-solving skills, excellent communication skills, empathy, high emotional stability, attention to detail, interpersonal skills, and transformational skills to shift the mindset of employees working from their homes, as well as maintain their virtual presence to lead virtual teams. These leaders should also become technically sound to lead virtual teams to boost the process of transitioning from a physical environment to a virtual mode of working in order to increase employee motivation, consumer satisfaction, organizational performance, viability, and effectiveness in achieving the objectives of the leadership and company (Avolio et al., 2018).

Strategy to Implement Change in Lenovo

In terms of implementing change in the organizational practice of Lenovo, the company recognizes the diversity in regulatory regimes and consumer preferences, focusing on both defensive aspects in Lenovo's operational country, China, and offensive growth in emerging economies, especially in the international space. Lenovo continually innovates and adopts human resource management and strategic approaches to corporate social responsibility, tailoring evolving market trends that reflect

Lenovo's values and global responsibility. COVID-19 has opened the eyes of individuals towards their health and life, which has led to increased online buyers' demands. Thus, there is a significant rise in the products and services available online that are more easily and readily available on companies' sites like Lenovo, which forces the management of the company to position the products and services accordingly to take potential advantage of the dire situations the world is facing during the pandemic times. To cater to consumers' demands online, the company needs to develop its "research, acquisition, and distribution" of unique products and services on the Lenovo Shifts. For good reasons, online payment systems have also developed across the world during the times of the pandemic, which forces Lenovo to partner with a company that can deal with transaction problems for the company and the consumer.

For the change in the management and human resource strategies, organizations function and operate in a dynamic environment to align with the "eccentricities" of dynamism in order to alter the management operations of the company globally. In such an environment, factors that affect a company's management and operations are sometimes beyond the management department's control. For instance, in Lenovo's case, the 2019 pandemic of COVID virus is a similar factor that has pushed the business sector to remap the operating modules and human resource strategies of organizations to align the organizational environment with the global business model in order to ensure optimal operations. To adapt to the changing dynamics of the operations and management of the company, Lewin's [change management model](#) would be adopted to remap Lenovo's operations to encompass the vast change in Lenovo, shifting the employees from office settings to home environments (Burnes, 2020). This model was developed during the 1950s by Kurt Lewin and is associated with the incorporation of change and the implementation of new, altered policies in the organization to maintain checkpoints in the HRM strategies and operations of the organization for the transitioned policy (Tang and Tang, 2019).

According to Lewin's model of change, the essence is to rely on the four optimal strategies of management to ensure the comprehension of the change and transition process. In the model, the first step entails the "unfreeze" mode, where the factors that cause and impact the change on the operating module of the company are analyzed and measured. Secondly, the model associates the process of change with the implementation of the new, altered policy. Apart from comprehension and change implementation, this model entails the primary phase of communication to impact the analysis and findings of the predictable impact of change, which is to be initiated with the employees (Roşca, 2020). The last phase of the model is "refreeze," which ensures the management and operations of a company are substantial in order to maintain the usage of the policy of the transition process (Hussain et al., 2018). Thus, the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic has encompassed vast changes in the operations and human resource management of Lenovo that the company needs during the lockdowns to remap its management processes.

Implementation Plan and Communication Strategy to Stakeholders

During and after the lockdown that was imposed for several months in various parts of the globe, the logistics systems have evolved significantly, which has led to rising the need for a cost-effective packaging system for users who prefer zero-contact delivery during the times of the pandemic. The company, therefore, is in dire need of devising a system for receiving consumers' signatures digitally to avoid COVID-19 contact and its spread. Lenovo, in this regard, can work more on its distribution channel while making deals for PCs and related items to make its delivery system operate more efficiently and effectively, even during the pandemic times. The reason the company and HR department need to focus on the digital buying behavior of consumers is that customers have started trusting digital sellers more due to COVID risk and the unavailability of products and services with traditional sellers.

Lenovo, therefore, needs to practice a transformational leadership style in its work-from-home policy to have a positive and prospective impact as a precautionary measure during the times of lockdown against the pandemic. Based on the leadership style opted for by the company's management and operations, as well as change implementation, the company can take steps to have effective implementation of the transition policy from office to home environment. For instance, the "unfreeze" strategy requires Lenovo's management to share the core values of the company to quantify the organizational objectives as well as keep the employees motivated toward the HRM goals that suit the organization. This strategy requires a transformational leadership style within the company's management and operations to identify the present core values of the company and the skills of the employees. This step would develop the skills of the employees serving in the human resource management department, which will help them shift their mindset accordingly (Delery and Roumpi, 2017). This process of identification can help Lenovo to define and delegate the tasks and management in various aspects of operations on the basis of employees' availability, possibility, and capability of completing the projects at Lenovo.

After "unfreezing" the problem at Lenovo, the changing strategy "refreezes" the management of the company to prepare employee interactions for redesigning the system of operations in order to produce continuous positive results for Lenovo's prospective environment. In addition, after identifying the values and skills of the employees in human resource management, employees can define the work environment, make updates, train the employees, brief the management on the style, and resolve queries that may arise while working at Lenovo. The company also needs to design the development strategy to apply rapid changes in the new system of work-from-home hacks so that the implementation strategy prepared in the three phases of the change implementation process can be effectively applied to train the employees, so that they can keep up with their motivation.

Collaboration and Communication Strategy

For this, a collaborative communication technique needs to be implemented in the company to communicate the change policy and leadership strategies to the stakeholders of Lenovo. This involves several steps, including the identification of all the factors by Lenovo leadership, understanding of the interests of both employees and company leadership, evaluation of the best strategies for the mutual agreement of both stakeholders, and a contingency plan to monitor, evaluate, and resolve possible conflicts. The first phase of communicating the strategy to the stakeholders of Lenovo involves the identification of all factors that are related to the transition from the physical office environment to a virtual business setting, according to the above-mentioned contingency and change implementation plan. Therefore, after listening to each stakeholder involved in Lenovo's transition to an online business setting, while considering stakeholders' perspectives about the implementation of any strategy.

The second phase involves the understanding of the concerns of both employees and [human resource management as well as leadership](#), to list the problems that management needs to address to meet the interests and needs of the employees of Lenovo. The management will address in parallel lines the strategies to apply the best change implementation accordingly in the human resource department (Anderson, 2017). Moving forward, the next step involves listing down all the positive and negative aspects of the proposed change strategy that is derived from the mutual agreement of leadership and employees. After completing these phases, the leadership and human resource department at Lenovo can document their production and distribution details after monitoring the criteria for transition policy and evaluation process of the contingency plan so that the company would not only rely on memory, as this will lead to conflicts while working from home hack.

This communication and collaboration strategy would help in effective communication about contingency plans and the mutual agreement within the organization to aid Lenovo in the formulation of the work-from-home policy for the employees and the human resource department's workers. While implementing such a strategy and following a transformational leadership style, there may be conflicts, problems, and issues arising every single day in the company due to the rapid shift. However, there would be strategies to overcome resistance along with Lewin's change management model to implement the policy of working from home while applying creative solutions within the human resource department to solve all the problems that occur during the abhorrent times of the COVID-19 pandemic and the trying times of lockdowns that have pushed people to shift to the newest realm of work. Moreover, there are certain decisions that need to be taken by the leadership, human resource workers, and the employees of Lenovo for the rapid decision-making to resolve conflicts within Lenovo's working environment and to maintain and enhance employees' motivation while they start a new endeavor to work from their homes.

Recommendations

Identification of the change implementation and employing leadership style in the rapidly changing global business environment becomes a significantly important practice that needs to be analyzed through effective leadership and organizational strategies. The recommendations for a business organization like Lenovo to swiftly make the transition from the physical office setting to working from home workspace create innovative opportunities for the employees, organization, and consumer community (Paauwe and Boon, 2018). These strategies in the human resource management department can create a highly dependable workforce that signifies a diverse range of improvement dynamics against competitors of Lenovo in the technology and PC maker industry, so that Lenovo can create value in the market. Business companies like Lenovo, through their [effective leadership style and human resource management](#) strategies, can influence the operations and management of the organization effectively. Identifying the important factors and abiding by significant recommendations can help Lenovo to create alignment of the highly dependable workforce with highly competitive employees with the organizational requirements of Lenovo (Anshu and Gaur, 2019). The organizational work environment of Lenovo has an enormous opportunity and impact on the development of a higher degree of productivity and performance of the organization through acknowledging diversity and innovation in the workplace, and especially the human resource management department of Lenovo will allow it to achieve sustainability in the e-commerce market. In the collaborative workforce of Lenovo, the organizational performance can be significantly enhanced through not only the human behavior at the HRM department but also through identifying the challenges and opportunities of technology.

Conclusion

It is to be concluded that during the trying times of the COVID-19 pandemic that hit the world in 2019 and disrupted almost all global operations from education to businesses and trade, effective human resource management strategies and contingency plans play a crucial role in the sustainability and overall success of the organization in this transformational time of business and market dynamics. For this to be achieved, analyzing different HRM strategies and the dynamics of organizational leadership can not only identify challenges and opportunities but also enhance the overall performance and productivity of a business organization like Lenovo. As the vice president of the human resources department at Lenovo, the development of the change or transition implementation strategy can create an effective and competitive edge in the market to catalyze change in the workspace. Moreover, identifying challenges and threats through a set of strategic implementations at Lenovo can enhance the overall performance, production, and distribution practices of the business organization during times of lockdown. Lenovo, the e-commerce company of the PC maker group, needs to focus on workplace management in human resources through opportunities and technological advancements, which will play a strong role in the collaborative workforce of Lenovo, focusing on developing customer-centric services.

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