Evidence-Based HR Management: What is it and what can we do about it?

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Presentation to IO/Occupational/ Work Psychology Community
18 March, 2013 (Singapore)
EBHRM – WHAT IS IT?
Learning from Medicine
Evidence-Based Medicine

“The practice of EBM involves a process of life-long, self-directed learning in which caring for patients creates the needs for important information about clinical and other healthcare issues.

To practice bedside, evidence-based medicine we need to ask an answerable questions, track down the best evidence available, critically appraise the evidence and lastly, integrate the results with the patient’s unique biology, circumstances, and values. An expert practitioner of evidence-based medicine is one who can integrate the evidence with other key issues.”

We must practice the discipline of evidence-based thinking

From Woolever, Family Practice Management
May 2008
Evidence-based (HR) management means making decisions about the management of employees, teams or organizations through the conscientious, explicit and judicious use of four sources of information:

- Best available scientific evidence
- Managerial expertise and judgement
- Organizational facts and characteristics
- Stakeholders’ values and concerns

Briner, Denver and Rousseau (2009)
Source: CEBMa website
Are we there yet?
What gets in the way?
Evidence-Based HRM
What is the Gap?

Knowing

Doing
Evidence-Based HRM
What is the Gap?

Fact, Truth, Evidence

Myth, Fiction, Misinformation
Encouraging employees to participate in decision-making is more effective for improving organisational performance than setting performance goals. **Fact or Fiction?**

US HR sample: 73% think it’s a fact
Asia HR sample: 73% think it’s a fact

Is it true? No, this is fiction. 16% improvement in performance with goal setting – 1% for employee participation

Rynes, Colbert & Brown, Human Resource Management
Summer 2002, Vol. 44, Pp. 149-174
Asia data collected by Organisation Solutions
Conscientiousness is a better predictor of employee performance than intelligence. **Fact or Fiction?**

US HR sample: 72% think it’s a fact  
Asia HR sample: 58% think it’s a fact

Is it true? No, this is fiction. Predictive validity of GMA .51 vs .31 for conscientiousness
Management Fads Growing – and Life Cycle Shortening

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Decade during Which Fashion Emerged</th>
<th>Average Number of Years between Fashion Introduction and Fashion Peak</th>
<th>Average Number of Articles on Fashion during Peak Year</th>
<th>Average Number of Articles on Fashion during Peak Year Divided by Average Pages in Business Periodicals Index</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1950s–1970s</td>
<td>14.8</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>3.06</td>
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<tr>
<td>1980s</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>5.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990½</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>130⁺</td>
<td>4.70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All “Evidence” is NOT the Same

1. Systematic reviews & meta-analysis
2. Randomised control groups
3. Longitudinal studies
4. Cross-group / industry studies
5. Case studies
6. Expert opinion
7. Anecdote

Best Practices usually based on #4-7!

Adapted from Sheffield School of Health & Related Research (ScHARR)
Evidence-Based HR
What is the Gap?

Science  Practitioner
Science – Practitioner Gap

What Scientists Know from Research

- GMA
- Goal-setting and feedback
- HR practice – org outcome
- Structured interviews
- Valid selection – performance
- Personality & performance

What HR Leaders Want to Know

- Align HR w/strategy
- HR practice & firm perf
- Contingencies
- Trade-offs for policy
- Low status of HR

Rynes, Colbert & Brown, Human Resource Management
Summer 2002, Vol. 44, Pp. 149-174
Consulting firms contribute to confusion

HR leader survey: Why do people leave?
1. Opportunities for growth and advancement
2. Quality of compensation package
3. Amount of job stress
4. Quality of relationship with supervisor or manager
5. Ability to balance work and home life

Consulting firm Benchmarking Study
## Meta-analytic Research on Retention

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictor</th>
<th>Correlation</th>
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<tr>
<td>Job Search</td>
<td>.21 to .42</td>
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<tr>
<td>Withdrawal Intention</td>
<td>.21 to .35</td>
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<tr>
<td>Weighted Application Blank</td>
<td>.31</td>
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<tr>
<td>Commitment</td>
<td>-.23</td>
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<tr>
<td>Leader Relationship (LMX)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Role Clarity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tenure</td>
<td>-.20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Role Conflict</td>
<td>.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Absenteeism</td>
<td>.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall Job Satisfaction</td>
<td>-.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work Satisfaction</td>
<td>-.16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Leader Relationship
2. Role Clarity
3. Role Conflict
4. Overall Job Satisfaction
5. Work Satisfaction

Opinion Surveys - Help or Hinder?

1. Opportunities for growth and advancement  
   -1.12
2. Quality of compensation package  
   -0.09
3. Amount of job stress  
   0.14
4. Quality of relationship with supervisor or manager  
   -0.23
5. Ability to balance work and home life  

*Not measured. However, people are less likely to leave if they: (1) have children; (2) have spouses that work; and (3) are married
Publications – Help or Hinder?

• Harvard Business Review
• HR Magazine
• Human Resource Management

1. Human Resource Management
2. HR Magazine
3. Harvard Business Review

Rynes, Colbert & Brown, Human Resource Management
More HR practitioners are seeking to improve their recruitment decision-making with the use of personality profiling tools. Lisa Cheong reveals how analysis of blood type or fingerprinting can help secure the best candidate.

In addition to the two formal tools, Yeow adds that the company also employs informal methods of profiling, such as face-reading. With this tool, HRnet One invited a face-reader from the United States on two occasions to train its leaders and consultants on how they can analyse a person’s facial features in order to better understand a person’s personality (for instance, the higher the cheekbones a person has, the bossier the person is).

The company also uses blood-type analysis, whereby a person’s blood type provides an indication of personality traits, a method which Yeow says is popular in Japan. The study of handwriting, otherwise known as graphology, is also another informal tool which is used.

While these tools are not used as the sole decision criteria for deciding on a candidate’s eligibility for the job, Yeow says both formal and informal tools help complement HRnet One’s usual recruitment process which its consultants conduct – such as its referral checks and screening for a candidate’s skill competencies and eligibility to the job scope.

Local HR publication – not helping evidence based practice!
WHAT CAN WE DO ABOUT IT?
Some Ideas

• Educate ourselves on evidence-based practice
• Help educate decision makers about the relative strengths/weakness of different types of evidence
• Expose HR to more good research
• Create better dialogue between academic researchers and practitioners
• Help translate meta-analytic studies so that HR practitioners can understand and use
• Provide an evidence-based perspective to the media
• Learn from and contribute to entities supporting this effort (e.g. CEBMa)
Thank You