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Students at the S.P. Jain Centre of Management (SPJCM), Dubai Campus.



A career in human resources

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The Dubai Human Resources Forum held its first post-summer meeting at the S.P. Jain Centre of Management, Dubai Campus. The audience comprising a mix of all nationalities got an opportunity to network, interact and share a pool of knowledge with representatives from across the industry.

Notes took the opportunity to explore a career in human resources with Dr Aneeta Madhok, Dean, Centre for Human Resources, and Professor of Organisational Behaviour and Human Resources, S.P. Jain Centre for Management in Dubai, Singapore and Mumbai, and Mohammad Abdullah Al Jasmi, Head – Human Resources, Retail Corp in Dubai.

How would you rate HR as a career option in this day and age – particularly for those interested in taking it up as a career in the UAE?

Dr Madhok: The biggest challenges for corporate growth in this era of globalisation are posed by the human resources employed by an organisation.

There is a talent shortage, retention problem, performance and productivity issues to align people to organisational goals and a lack of systems and management processes to drive and sustain the growth imperatives.

These are the areas where good HR professionals can contribute. According to many management gurus, in the next few years, we will see increasing demand for HR professionals who will lead organisations through these challenges.

There is a dearth of good HR professionals in the Middle East and South-East Asia. There are not enough educational institutions offering education exclusively in this field. The UAE will see more shortages of local Emirati HR professionals in the future as the process of Emiratisation will create a vacuum in this area.

Al Jasmi: The principle of human resources has changed and HR has become a strategic partner in any business nowadays. Therefore HR is the most vital function within a business and since there is a shortage [of manpower] in this profession there is a great future for those interested in taking it up as a career in the UAE.

What are the course options open to a high school student interested in taking HR at the college level?

Dr Madhok: The range of options varies from short-term programmes to long-term programmes, from distance learning, to virtual learning to evening courses, to full-time courses, after high school or after graduation. There are many options available to the person depending on the ambition of the student, his availability and the career plan he envisages for himself.

Is a bachelor degree enough? Or would you suggest a masters's programme?

Dr Madhok: While a bachelor degree would be enough to get an entry into the job, it will not give the depth and breadth of knowledge that a post graduation degree would. The ideal combination would be a Bachelor in Business Administration (BBA) with general management inputs, two to three years working experience in the industry, followed by an MBA with specialisation in Human Resources Management. There are now quite a few institutions, including ours, that offer an MBA with specialisation in the HR area.

Some institutions offer degrees specially in HR but the need to understand cross-functional aspects of management such as finance, marketing, operations etc. is not fully dealt with in such programmes.

Al Jasmi: A master's degree ... since business management is too broad.

What are the various career avenues open to a student of HR?

Dr Madhok: Every organisation needs HR professionals. Larger firms will have many of them, so you will be part of a team. Other career options for HR professionals are in the realm of management consulting in HR, training services, compensation and benefits services, HR outsourcing businesses such as recruitment and manpower, relocation services, diversity and cross-cultural management.

Al Jasmi: HR the core of any business; if someone has the right competencies in the field, they will be able to grow in other management fields within the business.

In terms of money – is this a well-paying field?

Dr Madhok: The money is as good as in all management professions such as marketing, finance, etc.

HR personnel are often perceived as people who works on behalf of employees – looking after their interests ... is this perception correct?

Al Jasmi: Yes but not limited to this.

HR people are professional in their field. They add value to the organization because they manage, develop the most important asset of an organisation.

Dr Madhok: Actually, the role of the HR professional is to balance the people interests with the business interests. Today, that is the major change in this perception that needs to come in, because they are not just 'welfare' people, but critical partners in business delivery.

What about the stress factor?

Dr Madhok: This too is the same as in any other management profession.

Al Jasmi: Proper time management and prioritising tasks will help reduce stress.

Do you have the aptitude for HR?

What kind of student is best suited to a career in human resources – in terms of academics and temperament and aptitude?

- First and foremost, HR professionals today need to have business acumen.
- They need to understand business strategy and resultant HR imperatives.
- They also need to understand human behaviour deeply in order to get people working together to create a high performance culture.
- So, task orientation and people orientation are both important temperaments and aptitudes for a good HR professional.
- Knowledge of the tools of the trade is important too, thus making appropriate qualification necessary to do the job well.

— Dr Aneeta Madhok, Dean – Centre for Human Resources, SP Jain Centre of

Management, Dubai

- A student who has good analytical skills;
- Good interpersonal skills;
- Deals well with people;
- Is well-organised;
- Patient, and has the ability for long-term and strategic thinking.

— *Mohammad Abdullah Al Jasmi, Head – HR, Retail Corp*

Specialisations within HR

- There is Training and Organisation Development;
- Compensation and Benefits;
- Selection and Recruitment;
- Employee Relations,
- Global Human Resources Management,
- Performance Management,
- Personnel Administration and many more.

— *Dr Aneeta Madhok, Dean – Centre for Human Resources, SP Jain Centre of Management, Dubai*

At the forum

The Dubai Human Resources Forum (DHRF), hosted at the S.P. Jain Centre of Management (SPJCM), Dubai Campus, brought together experts in the industry.

Martin Jalili, Chairman, DHRF, and Professor Christopher Abraham, Senior Vice-President – SPJCM, addressed the gathering.

A highlight of the session was a speech by Reg Athwal, Founder and Chairman, Raw Group, who spoke about effective recruitment and talent management practices that bring higher returns on investment in human capital.