

Unit 1: HR

UNIT OBJECTIVES

Reading:	Winning the war for talent; Managing creative talent
Language:	Contrast and similarity
Vocabulary:	Human resources
Usage:	Collocations with <i>set</i>
Career skills:	Managing appraisals
Culture at work:	Assessing colleagues
Dilemma & Decision:	Getting back on track

This unit focuses on factors that are relevant for the modern HR (Human Resources) professional. Issues that are looked at include the challenge of managing talent, workforce diversity and aspects of an effective appraisal. The unit opens with an opportunity to consider what criteria are important when deciding which organisation to work for. Two articles consider how to recruit, manage and motivate talented staff. In the Dilemma & Decision section students have the opportunity to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of different types of appraisal system.

Keynotes

As a lead-in ask students: *When a company has a job vacancy, what are some of the things that it might need to do?* (advertise the job, evaluate CVs, select candidates, interview candidates, choose the best person for the job); *In what external and internal ways can a company advertise a vacancy?* (external: employment agencies, internet job sites, local and national newspapers; internal: intranet, notice boards, company publications or newsletters); *What department deals with recruitment issues?* (Human Resources/HR).

Draw students' attention to the picture. Ask: *What aspects of an HR department does it show? What's the man reading? What do you think the 'quality screening' machine is for? Why are the man and woman shaking hands?* The picture shows a line of candidates queuing for a job and indicates some of the factors involved in the hiring process (scrutinising a CV, checking the qualities and skills that candidates possess and finally the handshake that seals the offer of a new position).

Before reading, ask students to list some of the responsibilities of an HR department (recruitment, training/career development, performance management/managing the appraisal system, conduct issues (disciplinary/behaviour),

industrial and employee relations, workforce personal data management, implementing systems for employee compensation/rewards/benefits). Get students to read quickly through the Keynotes to see if it mentions their ideas. Ask students to read the Keynotes again in more detail and check that they understand the terms in bold. Draw students' attention to the glossary for this unit at the back of the book.

 Coursebook, Glossary, Unit 1, page 143

Preview

As a lead-in, write *Pay* and *Holidays* on the board and ask students to suggest other things which are important when considering whether to work for a company (e.g. pension, flexible working hours, maternity/paternity leave, environmental outlook, opportunity to work from home). Focus students' attention on the list in the Coursebook. Check that they understand all the items. Ask students to rank the items in order of importance. Get students to compare their ideas with a partner and have a feedback session with the whole class.

Optional activity

You could bring in a selection of job advertisements from newspapers/the internet and ask students to look through to find those that match the criteria that they thought were most important in the Preview.

Listening 1

Ask students to listen to the three speakers and say which criteria they refer to.

- 1 career opportunities and performance-related pay
- 2 performance-related pay
- 3 international assignments; ethics

Speaking

Students now have the opportunity to discuss how HR managers decide which employees have the most potential. To introduce the topic you could brainstorm personality traits or skills that an HR manager might value in an employee (e.g. punctual, reliable, able to work in a team, motivated). Ask students to work in pairs or small groups to consider the question. Encourage students to think of ways that potential can be accessed (e.g. tests, task observation, appraisal, feedback from line-manager). Have a brief feedback session with the class.

Reading 1

Draw students' attention to the title of the article on page 9. Ask students: *What does 'the war for talent' refer to?* (the fact that competing organisations in the same industry want to recruit the highest quality workers), *Can you name any of the 'Big Four' accountancy firms referred to in the introduction?*

Start by asking: *What sort of things are companies doing to try and win the war for talent?* Get students to read the text quickly to find out. Then ask students to read the statements on page 8 and read the text again carefully to find information which will explain or expand on the statements.

Check that students understand terms such as *baby boomer* (someone born during the post World War II demographic 'baby boom' between 1946 and 1964). You could follow up by asking: *What is the significance of baby boomers going into retirement?* (following the baby boom there was a decline in the number of births, so when the baby boomers retire, a skill shortage may ensue). You may wish to tell students about the Sarbanes-Oxley Act or ask them to research information on the internet for homework and share it with the class. (The Sarbanes-Oxley Act (SOX) was a law passed in the USA in 2002. It outlines the duties and penalties for corporate boards, directors and executives of public companies. The law was passed in an attempt to ensure the reliability of financial information after a loss of confidence by American investors.)

- 1 Recruiting and keeping good people is particularly important for the Big Four because their actual product is employees' knowledge and the success of the business depends on client/staff relationships. People are the key to their business.
- 2 Partners are measured and rewarded as managers of people rather than on how much money they bring in.
- 3 Regulatory changes such as the Sarbanes-Oxley Act have increased demand for the services of highly-skilled people such as accountants. The result is a shortage of good people in the market.
- 4 They have introduced very detailed selection procedures to ensure that new recruits fit into the company culture.
- 5 They keep in touch with ex-recruits through special programmes in case they want to come back to the company some day.
- 6 Women often leave to have children or care for an elderly relative. The Big Four have introduced career breaks and the possibility to do part-time work in order to entice women back into the workforce.
- 7 Young graduates want an international career with travel opportunities. They consider a company's ethics to be important and may use that as a criterion when applying for a position.

Speaking

Give students a moment to think about their answer. Ask students to share their ideas in pairs or small groups. Encourage students to give reasons for their choices. You could ask students to be specific and think of a particular city that they would like to work in. Ask students: *What would you expect your company to pay for?* (language lessons, accommodation, car, schooling, etc.)

Vocabulary

Ask students to refer to the article to complete exercise 1 and then compare answers with a partner.

Do the first item of exercise 2 with the class to demonstrate. Ask students to refer to the article to complete the rest of the exercise.

- 1
 - 1 staff turnover
 - 2 scorecard
 - 3 shortfall
 - 4 selection procedures
 - 5 job-hopping
 - 6 payroll
 - 7 reward schemes
- 2
 - 1 annual staff survey
 - 2 pay rises, promotion
 - 3 job cuts
 - 4 regulatory changes
 - 5 retirement
 - 6 corporate knowledge
 - 7 alumni programme
 - 8 career ladder
 - 9 career break
 - 10 international assignment

Usage

This section looks at nouns that can be used to form collocations with the verb *set*. Briefly check that students understand the meaning of the collocations which use the words in the box. Ask students to replace the underlined words in each item with one of the collocations. Check that students use the correct article. You may wish to photocopy the Vocabulary record sheet on page 173 of this teacher's book for students to record different collocations for *set* using the spidergram at the top of the page.

- 1 set a date
- 2 set deadlines
- 3 set the goal/target
- 4 set the agenda
- 5 set a precedent/a trend
- 6 set a record
- 7 set the task

- 1 alike, similar
- 2 Although, While, Whereas
- 3 However, Nevertheless
- 4 Likewise, Similarly
- 5 on the one hand
- 6 on the other hand
- 7 On the contrary
- 8 alike

Optional activity

Ask students to close their books. Write the nouns that can be used in collocations with *set* on the board and elicit any others that students know. Get students to work individually to choose one of the collocations and give a definition or example sentence showing how it is used. They can then read their definition to a partner, who guesses the collocation.

You may wish to extend the activity by introducing phrasal verbs with *set*.

Write on the board:

- | | |
|-------------|----------------------------------|
| 1 set about | a to establish |
| 2 set aside | b start doing something |
| 3 set back | c cause something to happen |
| 4 set down | d to delay |
| 5 set off | e save or keep something |
| 6 set up | f present information in writing |

Ask students to work in pairs and match the phrasal verb and definition.

(Answers: 1b, 2e, 3d, 4f, 5c, 6a)

Listening 2

Students are going to hear Sharon Fraser from Deloitte Touché Tohmatsu talk about managing talented employees. Ask students to read through the questions before listening.

- 1 Managing Partner for Talent
- 2 looking after talent strategies for Deloitte's people in the UK
- 3 people development, retention, looking after appraisals, promotion processes, rewards and benefits
- 4 to be the pre-eminent professional services firm; by having the best people working for them, to have them engaged, to retain them and to make them even better at doing what they're doing
- 5 very successful – the company has won (a number of) awards
- 6 development
- 7
 - a Deloitte wants people who are looking for an intellectual challenge and who enjoy challenging work.
 - b Business today is more complicated because of the regulatory environment.
 - c Deloitte wants people to know that they consider every employee as a unique individual. At Deloitte there is a supportive environment which helps every individual to grow and reach their potential.

Language check

Ask students to read the information about contrast and similarity. Refer students to the Grammar reference at the back of the book.

 Coursebook, Grammar reference, Contrast and similarity, page 154

 Workbook, page 6

Practice

Draw students' attention to the title of the text. Ask students what they think 'workforce diversity' is. Ask students to scan the text to find out. Get students to complete the text. Have a feedback session and highlight the various alternatives that can be used.

Reading 2

Before reading, ask students to work in pairs or small groups and outline how companies can motivate and retain talented employees. Ask students to quickly read the article to see if their ideas are mentioned. Get students to read again and list the policies that Jim Goodnight mentions.

Ask students: *Would you like to work for SAS? Which facilities do you think are most attractive?* Encourage students to give reasons for their answers.

Policies: leafy campus, individual offices, free snacks, subsidised cafés, sports facilities, subsidised child care, early schooling (for employees' children), free health care centre, 'wellness' programme with nutritionists and lifestyle education, intellectual challenges.

Speaking

Ask a student to read out the quotation. Ask students to discuss the question in pairs or small groups. Have a brief feedback session.

Suggested answer

Potential problems: If everybody comes and goes whenever they please, it might be difficult to schedule meetings. Teamwork could also be disrupted by this kind of flexible work day. Clients and suppliers could find it frustrating.

@

Ask students to find a text and complete it. Depending on the facilities available, they can do this in class or for homework. Were they surprised with the findings? Students can compare their ideas with a partner.

Career skills

Ask students to read the information in the box. Ask: *Do you agree with the guidelines? Do they reflect the way that appraisals are carried out in your country?* Nominate a student to read the first pair of questions. Ask students to choose the most appropriate question for an appraisal interview. Then allow students to continue in pairs to complete the rest of the task. Check answers with the class. In pairs or small groups, ask students to suggest other questions that could be used in an appraisal interview. Have a feedback session with the whole class.

- 1 Shall we discuss how you could go about improving your performance?
- 2 Why have you sometimes found it difficult to meet your deadlines?
- 3 Is there anything that you'd like to mention about your working relationship with your colleagues?
- 4 How could we help you to manage your life outside work?
- 5 Are there any areas where you could use some extra training or support?
- 6 Would you like to receive some training to help you to manage your stress more effectively?

Optional activity

You could also use this as an opportunity to highlight the importance of tone. Read out one or two of the questions in different styles (e.g. confrontational, kindly, irritated, concerned). Get students to read some of the questions in different ways to their partner. Discuss how the change of tone affects the way that the question could be interpreted.

Listening 3

Tell students that they are going to hear two extracts from appraisal interviews. Play the first interview and elicit answers. For items 1 and 2, encourage students to identify what it was in the listening which lead them to form these conclusions. Play the second interview and elicit answers. Get students to compare the two appraisals and discuss the different approaches that made the appraisals succeed or fail.

interview 1

- 1 tense, uncomfortable, negative, not conducive to communication, disagreeable
- 2 unprofessional, conflict-ridden, discordant, frank
- 3 little or nothing: unproductive meeting

interview 2

- 1 conducive to communication, positive, professional
- 2 professional, formal, open, productive, constructive
- 3 identified problems and causes, found solutions, fixed objectives

Speaking

Ask students: *What other types of problems might be discussed in an appraisal meeting?* (timekeeping, attitude, performance, attendance record, etc.). Ask students to work in pairs. In one-to-one classes the teacher can take one of the roles. Get students to read the three descriptions. Check they understand the meaning of *frayed*, *erratic* and *of late*.

Divide pairs into A and B roles. Ask each pair to choose a description and role-play the interview. Point out that students can choose how they approach the interview. Some students may have fun with a more confrontational attitude, while others may favour a more accommodating approach. When they finish, ask students to compare their interview with another pair. Ask: *Which interview in the listening did your outcome most resemble?* If time allows, students could choose another situation to role-play and change roles.

Get different students to read out the sample questions from a self-appraisal questionnaire. Ask students to consider how they would answer the questions. If appropriate, students

can compare their answers with a partner. Alternatively, you could ask students to answer the questions for homework. Encourage them to give specific examples in their answers.

Culture at work

Ask students to read the information about attitudes to performance appraisal. Encourage them to give examples from their own experience. You may find it helpful to look at the Culture at work table from page 68 of the Skills Book (this is reproduced below). You may also find it useful to refer to the relevant section on Culture at work in the teacher’s notes supporting the Skills Book.

	Autonomy cultures	Consensus cultures
Motivators	A desire to achieve as an individual.	A desire to be recognised as a valuable part of the group.
Feedback style	Formal and direct. The focus is on performance and the personal strengths of the individual. Two-way communication is expected in the context of a one-to-one meeting.	Indirect: ‘face’ is very important. Feedback is usually to the group rather than to the individual. The style is informal and continuous rather than formal.

 Skills Book, Culture at work, page 68

 Teacher’s book, page 114

Dilemma

Ask students to read the Dilemma brief. Ask comprehension questions such as: *What was John Curry’s objective for the company?* (to double growth in ten years); *What effect did this have on work conditions for staff?* (cost-cutting strategies meant staff worked longer hours, closure of the child care facility meant many of the female staff went part-time); *How did he reward senior management?* (exclusive privileges, bonuses and promotions); *How was this perceived by staff?* (they saw it as unfair and felt he was rewarding friends); *What impact did it have on the company?* (sales fell and the company lost staff).

Task 1: Ask students to work in groups of three. Each student reads about one of the appraisal systems. Give students sufficient time to prepare their profile to present to the rest of the group.

Task 2: Ask students to hold a meeting to present each appraisal system and discuss the pros and cons of each one for this particular company.

Task 3: Ask students to choose the appraisal systems that they like best. Give students a short time to prepare their presentation to the class to explain why they think their system is most effective.

Decision

Ask students to listen to the HR expert give his opinion as to which system should have been chosen. Ask students to make notes of the key points. Ask them what they think of his views.

Write it up

Ask students to write a memo to Patricia Donohue explaining which system they chose and why. Alternatively, you may wish to ask students to prepare their memo in class and then complete it for homework. When they have finished, students should ask a partner to read their work and check that the memo has achieved their objectives. Does it explain the reasons for their decision in a clear and concise way?

Give each student a photocopy of the Writing preparation framework on page 174 of this Teacher’s Book, then use the Writing focus (Writing focus: Memos) to link the use of the framework and the style guide as students plan their writing. It may be useful to use the Writing feedback framework on page 175 when giving feedback on students’ writing.

Writing focus: Memos

- 1 First decide who you are.
(In this case, students are members of CSC's HR department.)
- 2 Every time you start to write you need to ask yourself two questions:
 - a What is the purpose of this piece of writing?
 - b Who am I writing to?*(Here students are writing to Patricia Donahue, the CEO of CSC.)*
- 3 Look at the section on memos on page 18 of the Style guide. Notice the suggested structure of a memo:
Date/To/From/Subject
Introduction
Main points
Conclusion and recommendations
Initials of the writer
Is this structure appropriate for this memo? What are you going to put in the subject line? Plan the sections you are going to divide the memo into. Then note down the points you might cover in each section.
- 4 What style should the memo be written in?
(As it says in the Style guide, memos tend to be less formal than business letters. They are usually short and clear. The language is simple and straightforward and the tone is normally neutral.)
- 5 What phrases might be appropriate in your memo?
(See the Style guide, particularly the phrases for giving information on page 18. Examples of useful phrases are underlined in the suggested answer opposite.)
- 6 Now go ahead and write the memo.
- 7 When you have finished, check your writing for: logical structure, clarity of ideas, clear communication, accuracy of language, appropriateness of style.

Memo: Suggested answer (220 words)

Date: 8th April
 To: Patricia Donahue, CEO
 From: Anges Newton, Human Resources
 Subject: Performance appraisal system

Our aim was to select the most appropriate performance appraisal system for our staff. To that end, we explored the following three tried and tested methods:

Top-down employee performance evaluations
 These were deemed unsuitable as relationships between managers and staff are understandably frayed at the current time.

Peer-to-peer evaluations
 In light of the problem with top-down evaluations, we found that this approach might have been viable, if not for the recent increase in turnover of staff: teams simply aren't sufficiently established for colleagues to offer each other feedback. We are keen to nurture group dynamics at this current time.

360-degree performance reviews
 This method would allow us to obtain comprehensive feedback on all levels of staff, in every aspect of their work, including peers, superiors and subordinates, clients and suppliers. The main drawback in this method is that employees often feel uncomfortable giving feedback about their manager. However, this can be alleviated slightly by conducting upwards appraisals anonymously through the HR department.

Having considered all the alternatives, we would like to put forward a recommendation of 360-degree performance reviews, as this method most clearly demonstrates that we are committed to a fair and thorough appraisal of all our staff. With your approval, we would be able to start implementing our recommendation immediately.

If you have any questions relating to the above proposal, please contact Anges Newton in Human Resources, who will be pleased to provide any further information.

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-  Style guide, Memos, page 18
-  Style guide, General rules, page 3
-  Style guide, Organising your writing, page 4
-  Skills Book, Writing 1, Memos, page 18
-  Teacher's book, page 123
-  Teacher's book, Writing preparation framework, page 174
-  Teacher's book, Writing feedback framework, page 175