

The Influence of eHRM on the Desire for Excellence: A Perspective Based on Daniel Pink's "Motivation 3.0" Theory

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Abstract: This article explores the influence of electronic Human Resource Management (eHRM) on the desire for "mastery" or excellence, a central element of intrinsic motivation as described by Daniel Pink in his book "Drive". Using Self-Determination Theory as the theoretical framework, the analysis demonstrates that eHRM can stimulate the desire for mastery by facilitating skill development, providing performance feedback and evaluation, as well as promoting collaboration and knowledge exchange. However, careful implementation of eHRM is crucial to ensure that technology supports, rather than undermines, intrinsic motivation. The article provides practical recommendations for using eHRM to support the desire for mastery and identifies important directions for future research in this field.

Keywords: eHRM influence on motivation, eHRM influence on desire for excellence, eHRM, motivation, IT influence on HRM

Introduction

In the increasingly technologized world of the 21st century, human resource management has expanded its boundaries, incorporating digital solutions and advanced technologies into its operational mode. This new paradigm, known as Electronic Human Resource Management (eHRM), represents the use of information technology to facilitate human resource processes, offering unique opportunities for employees and managers. In this context, eHRM is not just a mere operational tool but also a mechanism through which organizations can influence their employees' behaviors and motivations.

On the other hand, there is an evolution in how we understand and approach motivation in the workplace, vividly illustrated by Daniel Pink in his book "Drive: The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us." Pink presents a new framework for understanding human motivation, known as "Motivation 3.0." This approach focuses on three main elements that drive human behavior: autonomy, mastery (or the desire for excellence), and purpose. In this article, we will specifically focus on the concept of "mastery," which Pink defines as the inherent desire of people to get better at what they do, to improve and refine their skills.

By combining these two research domains - eHRM and Motivation 3.0 - new perspectives can emerge in understanding how technology and intrinsic motives intersect in the workplace. The purpose of this article is to explore this intersection, with an emphasis on the influence that eHRM can have on mastery, employees' desire for excellence. We will examine how eHRM can facilitate or inhibit the development of mastery and, consequently, how it can impact satisfaction and productivity in the workplace. Finally, we will provide ideas and recommendations for HR practitioners who aim to enhance eHRM to support their employees' mastery.

Contextualizing eHRM

Over the last two decades, organizations worldwide have begun to incorporate information technology into various aspects of their human resource activities. This process, known as human resource digitalization or Electronic Human Resource Management (eHRM), has profoundly transformed how organizations manage and interact with their employees.

eHRM involves the use of technology to facilitate and optimize HR processes. It covers a wide range of applications, from employee information management systems and self-service portals for employees, to recruitment and selection platforms, performance management systems, and much more. Through these tools, eHRM aims to enhance the efficiency, transparency, and responsiveness of HR functions.

Academic literature on eHRM has significantly grown in the last decade. Studies have shown that the proper implementation of eHRM can lead to various benefits for organizations, including improved operational efficiency, enhanced communication and collaboration, and increased employee satisfaction (Bondarouk & Ruël, 2013; Marler & Fisher, 2013).

However, eHRM is not a one-size-fits-all solution. Its effects largely depend on the organizational context and how it is implemented and managed. Additionally, eHRM can also have unintended consequences, such as increased technology-related stress or issues related to data confidentiality and security (Dery, Grant & Wiblen, 2016).

Regarding the impact of eHRM on employee motivation, research is still limited. Some researchers have suggested that eHRM can have a positive impact on engagement and job satisfaction as it can facilitate access to information, feedback, and professional development (Stone, Deadrick & Lukaszewski, 2016). However, more research is needed to fully understand how eHRM influences different aspects of employee motivation, including the desire for excellence or mastery. This is the space we will explore in this article. Our analysis is based on the self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000), which suggests that intrinsic motivation is supported by three fundamental psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. "Mastery," or excellence, primarily relates to the need for competence, but it is also supported by autonomy (the need to have control over one's life) and relatedness (the need to belong and have positive relationships with others).

Theoretical Analysis of Motivation 3.0

The desire to achieve excellence in what we do, also known as "mastery," is one of the most powerful motivational forces that humans can possess, according to Daniel Pink in his book "Drive: The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us" (Pink, 2009). Pink suggests that traditional motivation, based on external rewards and punishments, is no longer sufficient to satisfy the complexity and diversity of human needs in the modern world of work.

Motivation 3.0, as defined by Pink, involves three essential components: autonomy, mastery, and purpose. Autonomy refers to our natural desire to be self-directed, to have control over our lives and work. Purpose refers to our need to see our work as having broader meaning and relevance, contributing to something greater than ourselves. Mastery, finally, is the desire to become increasingly better at what we do, to improve and excel.

Mastery, though often overlooked in traditional discussions about motivation, is crucial for understanding engagement and job satisfaction. Pink suggests that mastery isn't achieved through occasional effort but requires "constant, long-term effort" (Pink, 2009, p. 115).

Indeed, Pink underscores that mastery is a "mindset," a perspective we adopt towards our work. It involves an approach to work as a "craft" or an "art," where the goal isn't just to complete tasks but to continuously improve and reach a level of excellence in what we do.

In this context, we can start to see the potential that eHRM can have in fostering mastery. eHRM can provide tools and resources to facilitate this ongoing process of learning and improvement, from online learning platforms and performance management systems to business social networks and other forms of collaborative technology. In the next section, we will delve into this possibility in detail.

The Influence of eHRM on the Desire for Excellence

eHRM, through learning and development platforms, feedback and performance evaluations, as well as facilitating collaboration and knowledge exchange, can stimulate the desire for mastery (Ruel, Bondarouk, & Looise, 2004). However, it's essential that the implementation of eHRM is carried out carefully to avoid potential negative effects on intrinsic motivation.

The desire for mastery - excellence in what we do - is, according to Daniel Pink, a powerful intrinsic motivational force. In this context, eHRM has the potential to either stimulate or inhibit this element of Motivation 3.0. This occurs through several channels, some of which include the following.

The first is related to skill development. eHRM, through learning and development platforms, can provide significant opportunities for enhancing skills and knowledge. By accessing online courses, webinars, training materials, and other resources, employees can continuously improve their skills and pursue excellence in their field.

The second channel is through feedback and performance evaluation. eHRM systems offer an efficient mechanism for collecting and analyzing feedback, allowing employees to better understand their strengths and areas that need improvement. This, in turn, can stimulate the desire for mastery by providing employees with the information they need to enhance themselves.

A third channel is by facilitating collaboration and knowledge exchange. Through business social networks, online forums, and other collaborative tools, eHRM can create an environment that encourages employees to share their knowledge and skills with others. This can stimulate the desire for mastery by offering employees opportunities to learn from others and improve their skills.

However, eHRM can also have a negative impact on the desire for mastery. For instance, if technology is perceived as complex or difficult to use, it could create frustration and stress, thereby inhibiting the desire for mastery. Additionally, if eHRM is used in a way that undermines autonomy or demotivates employees - such as through excessive monitoring or unfair use of data - this could also negatively affect the desire for mastery.

These considerations underscore the importance of a balanced and careful approach to eHRM implementation. To maximize the potential of eHRM in stimulating the desire for mastery, organizations must take into account their employees' needs, expectations, and concerns, ensuring that the technology is used in a way that supports rather than undermines intrinsic motivation.

Practical Implications and Recommendations

Given the potential of eHRM to influence the desire for mastery, it's crucial for human resources practitioners to understand how to use this technology to encourage intrinsic motivation. Here are some recommendations based on our previous discussions:

Invest in employee development: Utilize online learning platforms and other development resources to help employees enhance their skills and achieve mastery. Ensure that these resources are accessible, relevant, and user-friendly.

Ensure that eHRM practices are focused on employee development, use constructive feedback, and promote a culture of collaboration (Parry & Tyson, 2011).

Use feedback to encourage improvement: Feedback and performance evaluation systems can be powerful tools to stimulate the desire for mastery. However, it's crucial that feedback is constructive, development oriented, and delivered in a manner that respects employees' dignity and autonomy. **Create a culture of collaboration:** Encourage knowledge sharing and collaboration through business social networks and other collaborative tools. This can create an environment of continuous learning where employees can learn from each other and improve their skills.

Pay attention to implementation: Ensure that the implementation of eHRM is well-thought-out and executed in a way that supports rather than undermines intrinsic motivation. Avoid using eHRM in ways that could create stress or frustration, such as excessive monitoring or unnecessary system complexity. In conclusion, eHRM has significant potential to influence the desire for mastery and, consequently, employees' intrinsic motivation. By understanding this potential and carefully implementing eHRM, organizations can create a work environment that fosters the desire for excellence and supports commitment and job satisfaction.

Conclusions and Directions for Future Research

The impact of eHRM on intrinsic motivation, particularly the desire for mastery, represents a promising and relevant research area. In this article, we have explored how various aspects of eHRM can influence the desire for mastery, both positively and negatively.

We focused on three main channels through which eHRM can stimulate the desire for mastery: skill development, feedback and performance evaluation, and collaboration and knowledge exchange. However, we also emphasized the importance of a balanced and careful approach to eHRM implementation to avoid potential negative effects on intrinsic motivation.

This is just the beginning of a broader discussion. Future research should delve deeper into these and other aspects of eHRM's impact on the desire for mastery. For instance, it would be useful to investigate how different types of eHRM (e.g., recruitment systems, talent management systems, online learning platforms) differently influence the desire for mastery.

It would also be valuable to explore how the organizational context moderates the impact of eHRM on the desire for mastery. In some contexts, such as organizations with a strong learning and development culture, eHRM might have a greater impact on the desire for mastery than in others.

Lastly, further research into the role of individual factors, such as digital competencies, attitudes towards technology, or personality traits, in moderating the impact of eHRM on the desire for mastery would be intriguing.

Continuing research in this field can provide a better understanding of how technology can be utilized to encourage intrinsic motivation and support employees in achieving their mastery potential. This, in turn, could assist organizations in creating more engaging and satisfying work environments and adapting better to the challenges and opportunities of the digital era.

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