

## Chapter 34

# Impact of Design Thinking on Human Resources

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### ABSTRACT

*Design thinking in the human resources area is still a recent issue little known and exploited even at an international level. It has only recently begun to be worked on and shared by organizations, and it is pointed out as being one of the most important competences of the 21st century. It refers to a style of thinking that combines the senses with the context of a problem, creativity in the creation of new points of view, and solutions and rationality in the analysis and search for solutions to the context. The present research used the Employee Experience DT Model, applied on a multinational company and developed within three long sessions of brainstorming and brainwriting. The main conclusions outlined that DT stimulates the process of continuous improvement, reinforces teamwork, as well as creativity and effort in solving problems. Furthermore, it sensitizes the administration for the current existing problems, compromising it in their resolution, and working in partnership with its stakeholders.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

The application of Design Thinking to Human Resources is still an unexplored issue. Design Thinking refers to a style of thinking that combines the senses with the context of a problem, creativity in generating new points of view and rationality in the analysis and search for solutions to the problem. It is considered one of the most important skills to develop in the 21st century.

The aim of this research is to study how Design Thinking can be applied in the Human Resources department of a real and large organization which shall remain anonymous due to confidentiality issues. Through a case study, we seek to understand how Design Thinking may contribute to the self-reflection of the Human Resources department and teamwork. It is also intended to demonstrate how the use of Design Thinking can improve HR practices and improve communication between the company's management and employees.

A qualitative methodology was used through a case study based on the Employee's Experience Design Thinking model. The chapter is divided into two parts: in Part I the existing body of work in this area is reviewed, with the aim of knowing the state of the art in what concerns the evolution and activities of the Human Resources function, as well as the phases and main models of Design Thinking; in part II the case study is presented, explaining the adopted methodology and the collected data as well as analyzing and discussing the results. Finally, the main conclusions are displayed, indicating the limitations of the study and making suggestions for future lines of research.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Human Resources: Evolution of Concept**

Nowadays, companies are under great pressure, particularly because of the markets' increased competitiveness (Feenan, 2015). Organizational excellence is required and Human Resources (HR) departments can make a real contribution to the business through the capacity to generate value and reduce risk (Mitsakis, 2014).

Large teams are organizations that learn how to develop new skills and know-how which lead to new thoughts and feelings that in turn modify beliefs and opinions (Riche & Alto, 2001).

The globalization of markets and the arrival of new players as well as international competition, the emergence of organizational cultures of excellence, accountability of workers and centrality of customers are factors that have triggered Human Resources Management (HRM) in the 1980s (Ramires, 2015).

In describing the role of HR, studies and research in the field of management point out unanimously that, of the four resources in an organization (human, material, informational and financial), people is the most important (Badea, Mihaiu & Iancu, 2015). Several authors, including Peter Drucker, argue that human resources play a major role in the organization and define them as one of the most important investment that an organization can make, constituting the organization itself (Drucker, 1954).

Known as learning organizations, they define themselves as "organizations in which people continually expand their capacity to create the results they really want, where new and comprehensive thinking patterns are stimulated, where collective aspiration gains freedom and where people learn to learn together" (Senge, 2012, p. 28). They are constituted by people who constantly develop their capacity to

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