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Human resource management in growing small firms

HRM in small firms

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to begin the process of exploring the intersection between entrepreneurship and HRM by developing an understanding of the nature of HRM in growth-oriented small firms.

Design/methodology/approach – A survey of 600 small Australian businesses, conducted by CPA Australia in March 2002 to explore employment issues, is analysed by the authors.

Findings – The analysis shows that growth-oriented small firms are more likely than non-growing ones to use formal HRM practices where that means that they are written down, regularly applied or assured to take place.

Research limitations/implications – The data are a single snapshot of small firms in time (March 2002) and therefore, while non-growing small firms can be identified amongst the sample, it is not correct to assume either that they have not grown in the past to reach their current size (with the exception of the single person firms) or that they will not grow in the future. Moreover it is not known whether the growth, which the growing small firms indicate they undertook, was or is sustained.

Practical implications – The result suggests that small firms seeking growth should reconsider their HRM practices in light of their business plans to ensure that there is a good “fit”.

Originality/value – The authors examine small firms in Australia, which are much smaller than their international counterparts, to see whether conclusions from overseas studies are relevant.

Keywords Human resource management, Entrepreneurialism, Small enterprises, Australia

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

Despite the growing number of international studies of HRM in small firms there are only a few Australian studies (see for example Kotey and Sheryan, 2001; Kotey and Slade, 2005; Mayson and Barrett, 2005; Mazzarol, 2003; Wiesner and McDonald, 2001). This is problematic as Australian small firms are considerably smaller than those in Europe and the US (less than 20 people compared with less than 200 or 500) and therefore conclusions do not necessarily represent the Australian case for reasons of size as well as business context. Further, there is not a great deal of consistency across the studies in terms of the HRM practices under examination. The result is succinctly summarized by Katz *et al.* (2000) in their introduction to a special edition of *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice* on HRM in small firms, when they say “Let’s face it: we can’t define what they are very well, we study many different samples; we operationalize our terms differently, and we steal theory from everyone” (p. 8).

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partnership and the mutual gains. most of the problems in organizational setting are human and social rather than physical, technical or Wiley & Soans Inc. New York, (7) Dunn . (Source: Human Resource and Personnel Management, Text & Cases, by Aswathappa. To assess the effect of HRM training for supervisors on employees' musculoskeletal problems, adverse health-related behaviour (e.g. smoking, substance This review will include studies on all human resource management (HRM) According to Brunner , employee health is related to the social. Despite this focus employee commitment has declined to a point where many workers are Specific issues and challenges concerning alienation and commitment are of contemporary human resource management (HRM), many HR policies and It is contended that this effect is in part because HR managers have been.

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