

**DEALING WITH DISTRESSED EMPLOYEES:
A HUMAN RESOUCCE MANAGERS PERSPECTIVE**

**COPING WITH TOXINS IN TODAY'S ORGANIZATIONS:
A HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGER'S PERSPECTIVE**

**TOXIN HANDLING: VIEWS FROM HUMAN RESOURCE
MANAGEMENT**

**HANDLING TOXINS AT WORK: THE WHAT, HOW AND WHY
HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGERS DO IT**

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ABSTRACT

Human resource managers undertake a variety of tasks, including the provision of advice to employees. This can include advice about employment rights and responsibilities as well as on 'soft' issues, such as when an employee is upset or concerned about something. Currently HR managers are encouraged to focus on the contribution of an organisation's human resources to the overall performance of the organisation, which suggests that HR managers might now be less willing to deal with distressed employees and their soft issues. We find that Australian HR managers spend a significant amount of time dealing with distressed employees who are concerned about a very broad range of personal and work related issues. Contrary to expectations, we find that most HR managers suffer no ill effects as a consequence of their constant exposure to distressed employees.

Keywords: distressed employees, human resource managers, toxin handlers, caregivers, burnout, emotional exhaustion, employee well being

INTRODUCTION

Organisations are ‘emotional arenas’ (Maitlis, 2004, 375). Problems at home can accompany an employee to work, while life in an organisation has been characterised as promoting ‘frustration, bitterness and anger’ (Frost & Robinson, 1999, 97). Organisations can make a choice about how to respond to these distressed employees. Some managers will claim that there is no place for personal issues in the workplace: ‘Companies can’t be bothered with making everyone feel warm and fuzzy. There is a bottom line to worry about’ (Frost & Robinson, 1999, 97). This view is furthered by the current emphasis on HRM as a strategic business partner, which places considerable emphasis on the identification and measurement of the contribution of an organisation’s human resources to the overall performance of the organisation (De Cieri & Kramar, 2003). Some commentators regard this as over emphasising the role of the market. In this view, ‘employees are valued and treated accounting-wise as expenses and liabilities, respectively, on income statements and balance sheets –not as revenues or assets’ (Sikula, 2001, 421). An alternative view is that a concern with employee well being is consistent with promoting organisational performance (Frost & Robinson, 1999). Further, distressed employees can generate toxins in the workplace when they are ignored or they are handled in a harmful way (Frost, 2003b).

Our paper examines the role of HR in providing support to distressed employees, with a particular interest in the type of issues that are brought to the attention of HR managers, the amount of time spent on these issues and the personal and professional consequences for HR managers of dealing with distressed employees. This understanding is important in the current work environment characterised by rapid changes, globalization, increased time pressure and job demands, and labour shortages (Rantanen, 1999). Organizations need to be informed of the people issues that occur and that HR managers deal with at work, in order to effectively support both HR managers and employees with appropriate policies and practices. Our study is based on an analysis of interviews conducted with a cross section of HR managers. Interviews were used for two reasons. First, qualitative research allows us to gain an understanding of the role of HR managers in handling distressed employees at work

from the HR managers' perspective. Second, the respondents' perspective on an organizational problem allows researchers to test theories (Lee, Mitchell, & Sablinski, 1999), which in this study were the theories of handling toxins at work and of HR managers increasing strategic role.

In the next section we outline why a distressed employee might approach HR for advice and review the literature on the potential personal and professional costs to HR managers of responding to the concerns of distressed employees.

HR MANAGERS AND DISTRESSED EMPLOYEES

There are two lines of research that suggest that distressed employees will seek advice and support from HR managers: the first derives from the 'employee centered role' that characterised the work of the predecessors of HR – personnel managers and the second from the work on 'toxin handlers'.

Throughout much of the twentieth century, personnel managers had a 'employee centered' role. It was recognised that the work effort of employees is malleable and can be affected by factors outside of the workplace, such as sick family members, financial problems, marital issues and so on. Further, navigating the employment systems of organisations can be a challenge and personnel managers were available to provide advice and support on a broad range of matters, such as superannuation entitlements, leave provisions and pay issues. This employee advocacy role was easier when labour was scarce and irreplaceable and is more difficult when workers are perceived to be "a dime a dozen" (Rynes, 2004, 204). Some HR managers are still sympathetic to an employee centered approach and many employees still remember when personnel managers undertook this role.

Frost established that employees have personal and professional issues that can impact on their own and organizational performance. He defined those people who dealt with these negative or toxic emotions as toxin handlers: These people were empathetic with a willingness to act to try to address pain and suffering in others (Frost, 2003a, 2). He suggested that HR managers could be toxin handlers (Frost, 2003a, 2). This is because HR creates issues that give rise to need for toxin handling, such as organizational change programmes, downsizing, stretch goals and performance targets (Frost

& Robinson, 1999, 3). However, this work comes with a cost: toxin handlers often suffered personally and professionally as a consequence (Frost, 2003a).

Why might a HR manager suffer as a consequence of responding to the needs of a distressed employee? An established body of research on the ‘caring professions’ (social workers, police and school teachers) has demonstrated that workers in these professions typically report high levels of burnout. ‘Burnout’ consists of three components: emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation and reduced personal accomplishment (Maslach and Jackson, 1981). Emotional exhaustion was defined as a lack of energy and a feeling that one’s emotional resources are used up. Depersonalisation is the treatment of clients as objects rather than people and reduced personal accomplishment refers to a tendency to evaluate oneself negatively (Cordes and Dougherty, 1993). When HR managers are responding to the concerns of a distressed employee they may encounter the same problems as has been documented in the caring professions.

There are conflicting pressures on a HR manager when they respond to the concerns of a distressed employee. The solution to the problems brought to them might involve the interpretation of current HR policy, though HR is often involved in the development and application of a standardized approach (Greenberg, Roberge, Ho, & Rousseau, 2004). Standardisation has the advantage of consistency in approach so accommodating individual problems can undermine perceptions of fairness (Forray, 2006). A HR manager needs to weigh up the costs associated with having a distressed employee in an organisation against a potential backlash from other employees who do not see a case for departing from established rules and entitlements.

The level of organisational support for HR managers dealing with distressed employees can also have some bearing on the impact on a HR manager. Frost has argued that toxin handling takes a toll on those managers who provide support when it is not formally included in a job description (Frost, 2004), so toxin handlers have to work extra hard to get everything done (Frost, 2003a). On the other hand, toxin handlers experience satisfaction at having helped others in need (Frost, 2003a).

METHOD

We used a qualitative research method in order to address these research questions. We conducted semi-structured interviews of about an hour in duration, with nineteen HR managers from a variety of organisations. Most interviews resulted from industry contacts and some cold calls. We also used the snowball technique whereby one interviewee is asked to nominate other potential interviews (Sudman, 1976).

We started the interview by asking participants to describe a specific instance of when they had to deal with a concerned or distressed employee. In their descriptions, participants provided information regarding the nature of the issue and how it was resolved. We then asked participants to think more broadly and to tell us what were the most common issues brought to their attention and the amount of time they spent on these issues. We also asked participants if they considered the management of distressed employees to be a formal part of their job responsibilities and whether these responsibilities were recognised by their superior or CEO. In the last part of the interview, we asked the participants if (and how) providing emotional and instrumental support to people at work affected them personally.

One of the authors and a research assistant (skilled in qualitative research methods) independently content analysed each interview transcript. The research questions and the literature review suggested initial classifications of the content of the interviews, though as the process continued the categories become more numerous and differentiated. Our coding relied on the constant comparative method in which newly coded text was compared with previously coded text to ensure that the new codes maintained their integrity (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

Codes were compared after each transcript for the first three transcripts, and each four to five transcripts thereafter. Each coded portion of interview text was compared and if differences existed, discussed until a consensus was attained. Initially, some examples may have been put into more than one code. The approach was to begin broadly and then to refine as the coding process progressed. This refinement occurred through three readings of the interview texts: The first series of codes was broad and the aim was to generate category codes as the interviews were read. The data were labelled during this stage without concern for category proliferation. In only two instances at the start of the process were the codes not mutually exclusive and the text assigned to multiple codes. Then, during the second

stage of the coding process, nVivo 1.3 (a software package for qualitative data analysis) was used for focused coding. At this stage, coding categories were eliminated, combined or subdivided by looking for repeated ideas and larger themes that connected the codes. Lastly, pre- and post-nVivo coding categories were compared for comprehensiveness and agreement of the final results. This extensive coding process resulted in 33 “trees” or code categories. Once the data were coded we searched the data manually for evidence on each of our research questions.

RESULTS

Overall, HR Managers reported that managing soft or people issues were, formally or informally, part of their responsibilities.

“They’re part of our formal job description to provide that [support managers and employees with managing “soft” or people issues]... It is written into our job descriptions ... but a certain amount it is sort of unspoken or only softly spoken. I mean, there is a philosophy, I suppose, that we do have a responsibility to make sure that the employee is supported” (HR manager #7).

“...it is part of our responsibilities, but it’s more a passive role, so you don’t go out looking for it, but you deal with an individual if they come to you” (HR manager #6).

In fact, most HR Managers felt that the organisation and its employees *expected* HR professionals to manage the people or “soft” issues, as the following quotes demonstrate:

“... it’s just like we’ve got a HR department now so if you’ve got any problems, talk to them ...”
(HR manager #15);

“It’s probably not in my position description. It would be in my lower level manager’s position descriptions. But ... If I don’t do it, there are implications” (HR manager #5).

Some of these “implications” could be in the form of negative consequences for the organisation. So, most of the HR Managers felt that, by managing the “soft” or people issues, they were assisting their organisation achieve its organisational goals and protect its reputation. The interviewees explained that if they help people with their problems, people would be more satisfied with and

capable of doing their own jobs. As a result, the HR Managers saw managing people as a business imperative, as the following quote illustrates:

“The soft issues impact on the bottom line. I mean, they impact on the bottom line, not only in terms of direct cost if these soft issues blow up and they go to external jurisdiction, they’ll blow up in terms of reputation as well and they’ll affect reputation which affects the bottom line. So I think it’s a matter of casting those soft issues as business issues. I think they are business issues, which have to be addressed.” (HR manager #13).

But there was often a limit to what HR managers felt they could do for some employees. For example, most HR managers stated that if they felt the employee was not making good progress they would refer the employee to specialist services available either internally (as was the case with many large organisations) or externally. Very few HR Managers categorically said that they would not deal with employees’ personal issues. In these rare cases, HR Managers did not deal with employees’ personal issues primarily because they [the HR managers] were geographically “distant” from the employees, or the HR managers did not see the handling of personal issues as their role or within their area of expertise, or it was not in the organization’s culture for employees to bring their personal lives into work.

“...it’s pretty rare these days for HR people to be a sounding board for employees. It would happen more if there was some sort of relationship there, but I would doubt that it would happen on an ongoing basis” (HR manager #6).

Table I: Issues of Distressed employees

Response Categories	Description
Misconduct claims	Including allegations of theft, plagiarism, inappropriate use of organizational property. These may have legal implications
Soft issue usually misinterpreted/missed as an administrative one	Soft issue usually misinterpreted/missed as an administrative one
Family problems	Stress/concern/preoccupation that arises from the employees family situation, including carer responsibility and death in the family
Family problems impact on work	Stress/concern/preoccupation with family problems, including carer responsibility impact directly on individual work performance
Personal problems	Stress/concern/preoccupation arising from employee's personal relations outside of work environment that impacts on job performance, Stress/concern/preoccupation arising from external relationships, health, drug/alcohol impacts on work performance
Personal problems: health and mental illness (including depression)	Stress/concern/preoccupation arising from employee's health. Also inability to perform work tasks because of ill health. Personal depression arising from a multitude of factors such as outside relationships, suicide and other matters beyond their personal control, financial problems, ill health, work interpersonal relationships etc
Personal problems: drugs/alcohol	Stress/concern/preoccupation arising from employee's substance abuse. Also inability to perform work tasks because of substance abuse.
Maternity leave	Issues associated with an employee being on or wanting maternity leave.
Personal problems impact on colleagues/ clients/work teams	Stress/concern/preoccupation arising from external relationships, health, drug/alcohol impacts on clients/colleagues/work team
Criminal record	Problems associated with individual's criminal record or activities.
Employee suicide	An organizational member commits suicide, leaving other members emotionally vulnerable.
Downsizing	Change in organization structure impacts individual sense of security
Job responsibilities/duties and ability to cope mismatch	The employee and/or supervisor/team mate feels that there is mismatch between the responsibilities/duties of job and the ability to carry them out.
Interpersonal relations in the workplace	Includes relations between supervisors, peers, teams, individuals. Themes are: bullying, personality clashes, person-org misfit, power plays, leadership
Discipline	Managers and other supervisors approach HR for advice/clarification etc about disciplinary action
Legal issues	Problems/issues that have legal ramifications for the individual and the organization. This includes topics such as sexual harassment and equal opportunity, unethical practices. Workcover claims.
Terminations	Planned or unplanned redundancies.
Development and career planning & some mentoring	This includes issues of promotions, carer planning, training needs and education, as identified by the employer and/or employee
Performance management	Inability to meet performance targets
Recruitment	Involves being involved in or advising others on recruitment matters.
Workcover & OHS	Issues associated with work cover & OHS.
Managers/supervisory personnel seeking advice on policy and practice	Involves those in managerial or supervisory positions seeking advice for course of action/options for action/advice on ramifications of action, from HR
Employees seeking advice on family friendly and other policies and practices	Employees seeking advice on family friendly and other policies and practices.

In this particular case, HR manager #6 estimated that less than 2% of the HR Manager's time was spent on people issues that were of a personal or interpersonal nature, such as family matters, depression, harassment and bullying. Most of the HR managers' time was spent on soft issues regarding termination. In addition, whether or not HR managers handle the soft or people issues depends on the resources available to them. Many HR Managers felt that the organization was too large and the HR Department lacked the resources to be involved with the resolution of all soft or people issues. So, HR Managers encouraged and advised line managers to deal with people issues. In these instances, HR managers became involved only when there was a formal complaint, a complaint that spilt into the public and political arena, or the issue had liability implications for the organization (e.g., case of sexual harassment). Formal complaints invariably led to formal investigations that followed a preset procedure. Under this scenario, employees did not approach an HR Manager because they needed a shoulder to cry on or a space to vent their concerns.

"... pretty much the focus is coaching. Obviously an unfair dismissal or what not, we manage, but most other issues and grievances, we will either work very closely with the business, or we'll give them some instructions and pro forma templates, whatever and the script of things without actually doing it ourselves" (HR manager #18).

"... we've put a lot of time into frontline leadership programs. We have very structured, as I say, harassment and grievance programs. ... the ones [people problems] that get to the top are either ones that are likely to have a very large external exposure or they involve more senior people and therefore it has to be handled at a senior level" (HR manager #4).

Lastly, the interview results indicated that top management recognised and supported the dual role of HR as a business partner and as a people function. The CEOs, partners of finance or accounting firms, and top managers expected that HR would deal appropriately with the "soft" issues and valued this role of HR. Providing support to employees was seen to be critical to the success of the organisation because it increased or maintained job performance, customer care and satisfaction, staff retention, and workplace morale.

The majority (52.9%) of the interviewees stated that they spent approximately 10-30% of their time on the "soft" or people issues. In addition, fewer than 12% of the interviewees stated that they

spent less than 10%, and 29.4% stated that they spent more than 60%, of their time on the “soft” or people issues. All of the HR managers that reported spending more than 60% of their time on the “soft” or people issues were managers of specialist areas such as “Occupational Health and Safety”, “Sexual Harassment”, or “Equal Employment Opportunity”. Nevertheless, most interviewees agreed that the amount of time spent on the “soft” or people issues depended on the nature of the problem(s) brought to their attention. Some problems could take months to resolve, because of their nature and the fact that stakeholders internal and external to the organisation were involved. Further, some interviewees included the amount of time they spent advising line or business managers (on how to deal with people issues) in their estimate of the amount of time spent on the soft or people issues as part of their responsibilities. For example,

“I would say about 50% of my time is spent on either this [soft issues] or helping my staff manage people that are doing it, so my staff have to help managers on performance improvement and satisfactory performance, terminations and those kinds of things, either directly or indirectly” (HR manager, #12).

In general, people issues brought to HR for resolution fell into three main categories: work, interpersonal and personal (see Table I). The personal category included family related problems. The work category included organisational change, such as downsizing, and termination. According to most interviewees the two categories of work and personal issues are not mutually exclusive. Work related issues could affect the individual’s personal life. In turn, the individual’s personal life can affect one’s work productivity or the quality of work life of colleagues and clients, as is the case with mental illness, di/stress or carer responsibilities. As HR manager #19 explained:

“ ... where a person is distressed, managers are not trained to observe a change in behaviour and to see well is that an unacceptable standard or not, and that's regardless of whether it is work-related or not. I think if you distinguish between the two, you've missed the person, but if somebody's behavior has - - had changes, that can lead in time to conflict because there may be performance issue. So, it may have started off as a non work related situation and then after time it becomes a work-related situation ...”.

Interestingly, the third category of “interpersonal issues” appeared to still be one of the most common people problems in the workplace. Examples given by the interviewees ranged from issues that carried legal liabilities for the organisation such as bullying and harassment, to non-legal issues such as power plays or politics, personality clashes, and person-organisation misfit (e.g., “people do not like me” cases). Nevertheless, interviewees also reported that many “soft” issues are pleasant and rewarding, such as assisting staff with self-development and career planning.

Lastly, it is clear from the interviews that most HR managers *want* to manage the soft issues, because there is some personal payoff (such as self-gratification) and they believe that it is in the organisation’s interest to do so. In addition, it is clear that even though HR managers are managing the “soft” or people issues, there is an escape hatch in that they can hide behind the formal role and outsource the responsibilities. Most organisations, including small ones, have policies and procedures that HR Managers can follow in resolving a case or contract specialised services that HR Managers can refer employees to. Specialised services are outsourced in most instances.

“I do very low level, very short-term band-aid sort of, you know, get the person over their immediate emotional state, but anything beyond that I would refer to a counsellor” (HR manager #1).

“So, what happened in the end, after minor baby steps of improvement, we had to say ‘you need external help from professionals’ because it got to a depressive state” (HR manager #2).

The interviewees appeared to be divided on whether or not there were any issues that they would not deal with. Many of the interviewees said that they would at least listen to an employee’s problem or concern and then decide if the employee should be advised to seek, or referred to, other professional help.

“I can’t imagine [that there would be any issues that I would not deal with] ... if we need assistance with disability issues or things of that nature, we outsource that work with a provider who will assist us with recommendations and services and what not.” (HR manager #18).

“Sometimes some of the OH&S issues can be dealt with by the maintenance area or the property buildings area. But basically anything that’s HR is here. ... We have a counsellor who comes to the [workplace] once a week for one day... I could talk to the counsellor confidentially and get

some ideas... So, if it's really a medical or a psychological problem, I would refer people on, and even in the case where somebody is feeling bullied, I would often suggest that they have a debrief with the counsellor and get some strategies ... being a small place, it's pretty much team work. So, you don't just say 'oh, no, that's someone else's area'" (HR manager #14).

"I could get anything. I have to deal with all of them and assess them on their merits." (HR manager #19).

"I do deal with a wide range of issues, and part of my role is to provide clinical supervision of some staff as well" (HR Manager #1).

In contrast, some interviewees stated that they would not deal with issues that they did not feel qualified to deal with and others stated that they would not deal with non-work or personal issues (such as divorce matters).

"We don't deal with sexual harassment. We've got sexual harassment advisors. We've got discrimination advisors." (HR manager #12).

"Generally harassment issues will be dealt by our equity officer in HR ... but apart from that, pretty much any issue that's brought to our attention we deal with." (HR manager #13).

"We actually outsource. ... We are not professionals, we are not experts, and I personally don't like to, you know, be a sort of amateur in areas as important as this [a case of suicide committed by a person close to the employee]" (HR manager #6).

"We have an outsource provider who provides employee assistance. ... so, we don't often get cases that come to our attention purely on personal issues. ... So, we wouldn't offer counselling around things to do with a divorce ... we would refer them to the outsource provider... The other services that we offer our employees is basically an assist program that will help them if they need some assistance in sourcing aged care for a parent, they can use those services free of charge. If they need assistance finding a nanny, a housekeeper, a gardener, those sorts of things." (HR manager #18).

In most cases, the divide appeared to be a matter of how the interviewees interpreted the question. For some interviewees listening to the employee and making an assessment prior to referring the employee to a "specialist" service provider constituted "dealing with every issue". For other

interviewees, this referral process meant that they were not “dealing” with the issues brought to them, possibly because they were not involved in their resolution.

The impact of managing people issues on the HR managers interviewed varied from none or minimal to a significant extent. For example, many HR Managers stated that they did not find managing people or soft issues stressful. This was attributed to three main reasons; first, the HR manager was not close to the employee, so there was no personal relationship; second, strict procedures were followed that were seen to offer a fair process and outcome and, therefore, give the HR person peace of mind; third, having work experience in Human Resources helped HR Managers manage any stress that they might have felt from managing people issues. Some HR Managers went as far as saying that they enjoyed dealing with people and with people issues more than they enjoyed dealing with the business / strategic issues.

“I think probably managers deal with it [dealing with distressed employees] more than HR. ... I think it’s the relationship. You know, you might confide in a team-mate. ... my experience is that if you were going to bring you know, your personal issues into workplace, it is probably with friends and your mates within the work environment that you might share it with, rather than someone who is more in a sort of formal role” (HR manager #6).

“I don’t go home every night and worry about them ... because I know that I’ve done whatever I can to try and steer them in the right direction” (HR manager #12).

“... most of the time I would say it doesn’t affect me personally in any real way. ... I’ve been in HR for quite a long time, and I’m fairly experienced with handling these sorts of issues” (HR manager #11).

“Look, I think it’s a general category of stress. You know, the soft issues are just part of the bigger job and the stress that goes with that. I wouldn’t say that I suffer more stress from the soft issues than the other responsibilities that I have in my job, so I’m not sitting here feeling terrible because, you know, I’ve had to counsel someone who has been harassed. Usually, actually, I feel very good about myself when I’ve done that because, you know, I’m helping them in some way” (HR manager #5).

Yet, the impact of dealing with the soft or people issues on the HR manager appears to depend on the degree of support they get from the organisation and on the industry they work in. For example, it appears that HR Managers in “people” or “care” industries have a close relationship with the employees and, therefore, become more involved with employee’s personal issues. In particular, the HR Managers of organizations in the health or special care feel that the employees’ health (personal) problems are work-related. In such industries, the HR Manager can become emotionally affected by handling the soft or people issues, as the following quote illustrates:

“Um, personally it [the impact of dealing with the soft issues] varies ...I have been able to, on many instances, to sort of keep that shell around me. I have found with this particular case that I’m talking about, very difficult, because I ended up during that time myself having a sort of minor sort of episode of depression, which possibly was a combination of work and some external sides”
(HR manager #8).

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Our study provides evidence that HR managers do deal with distressed employees. HR managers do not attempt to deal with all issues brought to them by employees: they deal with those that they feel qualified to assist with and outsource the remaining issues to those formally equipped to provide professional assistance (usually an employee assistance programme). We find that HR managers take the view that organisational well-being is advanced by employee well-being.

Contrary to existing research on the caring professions and toxin handlers, most of our HR managers did not report suffering adverse consequences as a result of their dealings with distressed employees. There are a number of explanations: First, for most HR managers the ‘soft’ employee issues do not consume the majority to their work time and there was no close personal relationship with the distressed employee. In fact, many HR managers find this aspect of their role professionally and personally rewarding. Second, they were able to provide assistance to distressed employees. The HR manager’s knowledge of organisational systems and procedures appears to have meant that they could make meaningful interventions. Third, HR managers were aware of their limits, referring

distressed employees to others or outside services when issues went beyond their competencies.

Finally, unlike Frost's toxin handlers, our HR managers were often encouraged by their managers, formally or informally, to provide support and advice to distressed employees. HR managers felt that they were well supported in their efforts by those in senior management, even though these activities might not always form part of a formal report on the HR function.

This caring aspect of a HR manager's role requires further research. Our focus was on the interventions by HR managers that they deemed to be successful. The next step involves understanding the impact on HR managers when their interventions to help a distressed employee back fire. While their intentions may be to help a distressed employee, it could be that the employee never returns to full capacity or that the reactions of co-workers limit the range of intervention strategies. What are the implications for HR policy? We might anticipate that HR managers learn from past claims by distressed employees and anticipate similar future claims by way of policy changes, though this needs systematic research. Responding to the needs of distressed employee is a very human aspect of human resource management. The increasing use made of on line HR systems represents an opportunity to free up time of HR managers to focus more on these soft issues, though could also have the effect of distancing HR to the extent that they are no longer the first port of call in providing support to employees facing personal and/or professional difficulties.

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