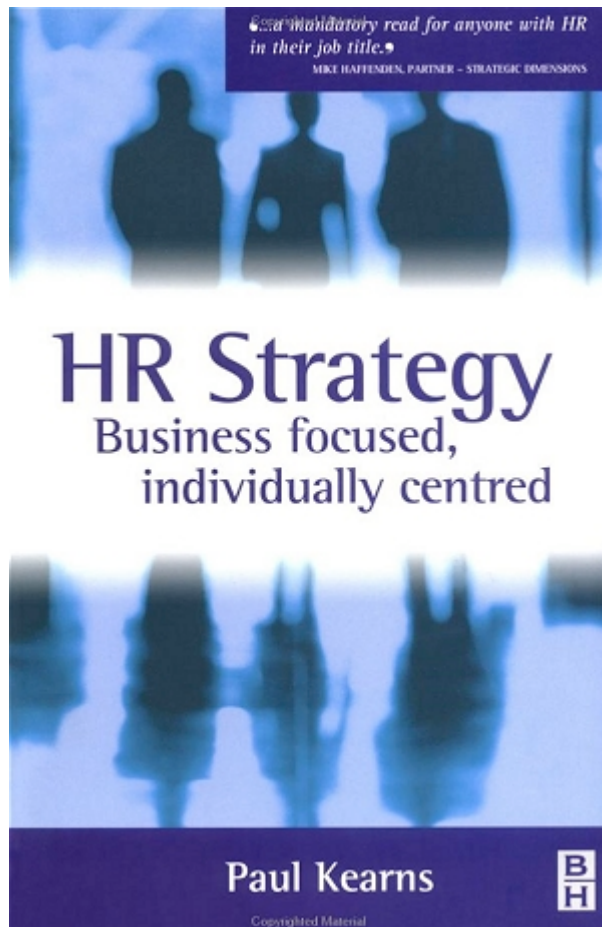


"HR Strategy – Business focused, individually centred" by Paul Kearns



This is a great book for everybody interested in real strategy, HR or general management. Paul Kearns shows, why most organisations have nothing to be called an "HR strategy" and how those organisations - that do have one, can generate extraordinary performance. The whole book is about the contribution of HR and especially of HR strategy to the success of the business. The word "strategy" has been abused for many years now by consultants and board members alike, who believe that marginal achievements in cost cutting, straightforward budget plans or the more or less successful imitation of competitors earn the attribute "strategic". So, it is really refreshing to find an author, who remembers that strategy always involves a sustainable **competitive advantage** – something that makes a difference.

The book is divided into three parts. The first one builds the foundation by discussing the definition and relevance of "strategy". Moreover, the interesting concept of the **HR maturity scale** is introduced, which allows you to evaluate where your own organisation is positioned.

The second part, among other issues, deals with the **criteria** a real HR strategy has got to satisfy. In chapter 7, Paul Kearns asks 4 questions, you should always ask yourself when you think you have developed an HR strategy:

- What indicators (beyond the HR function) signal that the HR strategy is (not) working?
- Who reports on HR strategy on board level?
- If it doesn't work, which strategic business objectives will not be achieved?
- If it works well, where will value be added and how much?

Finally, part three is about developing and implementing an HR strategy. As any strategy, an HR strategy must **add value** in respect to output, revenue, quality or cost. After discussing the factors that influence such a strategy and the concepts of **performance measurement**, Kearns develops the "high value organisation" with staff retention being one of the core value propositions. His **added value HR system** is based on the five corner stones "Learning", "Value creation", "Recognition and rewards", "Employee engagement" and "Continuous improvement".

The author shows by means of several examples (esp. Toyota), that a real HR strategy can add terrific value to an organization. However, he points out that there is no easy step-by-step guide to be followed by each organisation in the same way. The perfect HR strategy looks different for each company and generally is more difficult to implement than a financial or marketing strategy. So, many companies settle for developing strategies for the other areas and get along quite good without having one in HR. But having an HR strategy based on added value is likely to get your organisation to the top and that's what this book is about.

As there are many examples from the author's own experience, the book is fun to read. Sometimes you may wish the statements made in the book to be a bit more tangible – especially with the issues of measurement and added value. But this is the only small downer to be found so that it can only be recommended that you read this book and use the insights for the best of your own organisation.

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