

Developing and Implementing a Framework to Study Human Resource Management in 'Venture Companies' (Start-up Companies) in Japan¹

Darren M. McDonald

Abstract

This paper outlines an exploratory research framework used to study Human Resource Management (HRM) systems, practices and issues in Venture Companies (start-up companies) in Japan. After clarifying the terminology used, which in turn determines the scope of research, and reviewing the Japanese literature, the paper attempts to position HRM in the context of Venture Companies in Japan. A longitudinal case study based on qualitative research approaches suggested for the research framework focuses on the need to appreciate the processes of HRM within the context of each individual Venture Company as well as enable new understandings to emerge in data grounded in the research field. Since the study has already commenced with ongoing analysis as part of the research process, the paper will draw from some preliminary findings to highlight some features of both the research framework and issues surrounding HRM in one of the companies involved in the study.

Keywords: Human Resource Management (HRM), start-up companies, Venture Companies, Japan, qualitative research

Contents

1. Introduction
2. Japanese Terminology and Scope of Research
3. Analysis of the Japanese Business Literature
 - A. HRM Key Factors of Success in Japanese Start-up Companies (Atsuhiro

¹ This research was made partially possible by a special research grant from Daito Bunka University. I would like to express my greatest appreciation to the University management for their financial generosity and to the University staff and fellow colleagues who were a source of endless support.

Yachi)

- B. Work Style in Japanese Start-up Companies: The “*Shigoto-jin*” (Hajime Oota)
- C. Lessons Learnt in Developing a Research Framework – A Prologue
- 4. The Study Framework
- 5. The Study Framework in Action - Some Preliminary Findings
 - A. Background of Case Study Company – “Company A”
 - B. The *Shigoto-jin* and Entrepreneurial Aspirations
 - C. Organizational Change, Corporate Culture & Job Role Clashes
- 6. Conclusion

1. Introduction

Presidents and top management of Venture Companies in Japan place great importance on HRM systems, practices and issues. For instance, according to a news release on January 23rd 2006 by the (Japanese) Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry, the major challenge for Venture Companies in Japan is how to procure, retain and train human talent. Although the survey targeted University-initiated Ventures, the challenges are echoed amongst top management in Venture Companies founded in a variety of contexts. Waseda Daigaku Antoreprenuuru Kenkyukai (ed.) (2002) in drawing from a study of entrepreneurs (n=308) in Venture Companies in Japan indicated that of the top seven competencies necessary as an entrepreneur, three were attributed directly to human resource practices with even the remaining four referring to job competencies.(p. 93)

Despite the importance presidents and top management of Venture Companies place on HRM systems, practices and issues, little research exists that specifically focuses on this area. Of the studies that have been conducted, the frameworks utilized and the analysis of results suggest that Venture Companies in general face different critical issues in comparison to their large-scale counterparts. When similar critical issues do appear, the similarity is at surface level and one must look deeper to gain a richer sense of how in fact inherently these issues often differ. (Ida & Ooshima (1998), Oota (2001), Yachi (2000)).

Ida & Ooshima (1998) in comparing the “flow” of “traditional” HR functions (namely; recruiting → training → placement/rotation → evaluation → incentives → benefit packages → retirement/employment termination) in large companies with Venture Companies list critical differences and characteristics for each function. In the area of job placement/rotation, for instance, Ida & Ooshima (1998) note that for large companies this function is characterized by ‘pre-determined systemized job rotation patterns’ and ‘(focus on) career paths’. However, for the Venture Company, it is the employees themselves that determine their work in line with development and growth of the business project. (p. 184)

Although much can be learned from comparing the nature of traditional HR functions in large-sized firms to that of start-up companies, extending the focus beyond conventional HRM areas of study can open up the way for new learning and insights. The insights gained from the experience of Venture Companies may even offer a new lens to study HRM in large companies, broadening our understanding of HRM as a whole.

The purpose of this paper is to briefly outline the set of approaches (i.e. research framework) used to study HRM systems, practices and issues in Venture Companies in Japan. Although first drawing from conventional areas of concern in literature about HRM, the framework attempts to broaden the focus by gearing the study as a deep exploration and utilizes qualitative research methods. As the study is concerned with HRM systems, practices and existing issues in action, the research framework affirms the importance of processes which can only properly be appreciated over a timeline continuum. As such, the study framework is designed as a longitudinal case study that recognizes the unique circumstances and situation of each company (i.e. a contingency approach). In providing the background for this framework, this paper reviews the limited literature in studies in Japan on HRM in Venture Companies. After outlining the research framework, the paper will illustrate some of the framework’s features with examples of how it was used in the field and highlight some of the preliminary findings, namely; (1) the *Shigoto-jin* and entrepreneurial aspirations

and (2) organizational change, corporate culture and job role clashes.

2. Terminology and Scope of Research

Before proceeding with the discussion about the literature and research framework, it is important to appreciate some of the Japanese terminology used by researchers (and the companies themselves) which distinguish Venture Companies from that of small companies. By nature of the definitions of the Japanese terminology and applying the terminology to my own study, how this terminology is defined also defines the scope of my research: i.e. distinguishing “Venture Companies” from simply companies that have a small organization.

In Japanese, the direct translation of “start-up company” is “起業” (*Kigyō*), using the two Chinese characters (*Kanji*) “起” “*ki*” meaning to “happen, occur or raise” and “業” (*gyō*) meaning “industry, commerce or business”. Despite the existence of the Japanese term in Kanji, most authors of the studies I have read tend to prefer the term “ベンチャー企業” (*Bencyaa Kigyō*) which has a mix of the English word “Venture” and the Japanese word “企業” (*Kigyō*) meaning “business enterprise, business organization, firm or company”. As such, “*Bencyaa Kigyō*” is often translated into English as “Venture Company”.

Examining the differences in use of terminology between “起業” “*Kigyō*” and “ベンチャー企業” “*Bencyaa Kigyō*” or this terminology with the English term “start-up company” goes beyond the scope of this paper. However, it is important to note that most authors consciously use the term *Bencyaa Kigyō* and reference the analysis by Matsuda (2005). According to Matsuda (2005), the term *Bencyaa Kigyō* was first coined by Chikao Tsukuda of the (Japanese) Ministry of Trade and Industry (now known as the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry) after attending a Boston College Seminar. *Bencyaa Kigyō* is defined by Matsuda (2005) as “... a young company that is propelled by an entrepreneur who possesses a strong drive for growth and is undaunted by risk. It is a company that is refreshingly novel due to its original creativity in its products, goods (or services) and is enterprisingly autonomous while holding a sense of discernment towards society and the world.” (pp. 15-16) (Translation mine).

While Matsuda (2005) comments that it would be largely companies in the Information Technology industry that meet the full sense of the definition, he is willing to embrace companies that fulfill just over half of the conditions of the definition and thus more broadly defines a *Bencyaa Kigyoo* as a "... young company undaunted by risk that takes on the challenge of entering new domains (of business)". (p. 16) (Translation mine).

In my own study I too utilize the English translation of the Japanese *Bencyaa Kigyoo*, i.e. "Venture Company", so as to appreciate how it is defined in the Japanese literature in the broader sense defined by Matsuda (2005) above. Using the term Venture Company also distinguishes these types of companies from small-sized companies. Where as the Venture Company is "taking on the challenge of entering new domains" while also being "undaunted by risk", any other organizations that are small in size but do not meet this definition are not considered a Venture Company. By using the term Venture Company I therefore narrow the scope of my own research in line with how other researchers have. Though the small organization would encounter many of the HRM issues that Venture Companies do, the Venture Company faces a slightly different set of issues that come from entering new and uncharted business domains (innovation, heightened awareness of a changing market and increased organization fluidity to respond to these changes may be some examples). Further, as "Venture Company" is part of the common vernacular in the real world of business, using the term Venture Company in research, especially in interviews with employees and management, creates the opportunity to realize a definition that is grounded in the research field.

Another Japanese term related to Venture Business that often appears in the literature is "起業家" "*Kigyooka*" which uses the same Kanji combination for "happen, occur or raise" and "industry, commerce or business" with the addition of "家" "*ka*" which normally would mean as a single character "house or home" but in this Kanji combination means "person". Thus in English "起業家" "*Kigyooka*" would translate as "Entrepreneur". Apart from the Kanji word "起業家" "*Kigyooka*", in the literature can also be found the word "アントプレナー"

“*Antopurenaa*” which is the term “Entrepreneur” directly borrowed from English. Although there is a need to examine the distinction in usage of the two terms, my understanding from a general read of the Japanese literature is that “起業家” “*Kigyouka*” is almost always used in the discussion around Venture Companies, where as “アントプレナー” “*Antopurenaa*” takes on a wider scope to include individuals in both large and small-sized firms who take on the trait of challenging oneself to start a new aspect of business. Indeed, the term entrepreneur is commonly used in relationship to “corporate entrepreneurship” (see for example, NRI Amerika/Babuzon Daigaku (2001)). In this paper I use the English term “entrepreneur” in the narrower sense of top management of Venture Companies.

3. Analysis of the Japanese Business Literature

In the Japanese business literature, studies of HRM in Venture Companies are either large-scale surveys covering a range of HRM functions, (usually followed up by interviews with top management or personnel-related staff from a selected number of companies), or individual case studies that focus on a small number of HRM issues. Any mention of HRM in the general literature about Venture Companies, though noting the importance of the role people play, is normally very limited. Issues as business plans, capital procurement, innovation and so on, gain nearly all the attention. In this section I review two large-scale surveys with a discussion on the findings of these surveys.

A. HRM Key Factors of Success in Japanese Start-up Companies (Atsuhiko Yachi)

Yachi (2000) summarizes the research framework and findings from a HRM perspective of a research project he participated in that was requested by the (Japanese) Ministry of Labor (now The Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare). The results of the research were published in a report titled “Seichosangyoubunya ni okeru Kouyou Shisutemu no Doukou ni kansuru Chousakenkyuhoukokusho” (“A Research Report into the Shifts in Employment Systems of Growing Companies”) in March of 1999 (Zaidanhojin Kouyoujouhousentaa (1999)). The research consisted of a large-scale

questionnaire survey covering a broad spectrum of business sectors (3,000 companies were sent the survey questionnaire and there was a response from 399 (13.3%) of which 391 (13.0% could be utilized) followed by an interview survey of 16 companies which provided case studies to ground the findings.

According to the report (Zaidanhojin Kouyoujouhousentaa (1999)), the research framework covered the following areas; (1) Characteristics of the company (sector, years since establishment, scope, average age, personnel planning, sense of lack of personnel), (2) Procurement/Retaining employees (characteristics desired in employees, recruiting methods, existence of recruitment practices depending on job type), (3) Personnel Performance and treatment (of employees) (existence of an ability-based grade system, specialist system, weighting of importance in evaluations, existence of consolation, current remuneration system, future remuneration system, existence of an annual pay system, existence of discretionary work practices), (4) Entrenching Human resources / Increase Morale (measures to encourage the entrenchment of human resources, measures to increase employee morale, existence of counseling systems, content of counseling), (5) Development of Human Resources (fundamental ideology, objectives, measures for the development of human resources), and (6) Employment type (measures to deal with a diversity of employment types).

Results of the research were summarized and described by Yachi (2000) under five main headings as following:

- Procurement/Retaining Employees: Irrelevant of business type, and the route of recruitment, employees were hired on a need basis. Companies that targeted niche markets tended to focus more on mid-career hiring with all companies utilizing the Internet as the main part of their recruiting efforts. The characteristics most sort for in potential employees were the ability to take action and get things done, creativity and planning ability, enthusiasm and drive, and a strong sense of challenge. On top of these traits, companies hired mid-career employees for their specialty, technical and/or management skills.

- Personnel Performance and Treatment: Approximately half of the success-type or innovative-type companies based their personnel performance and treatment on the fundamental philosophy of “freedom with personal responsibility” and “autonomous workers”. This is a trait the researchers claim differentiates the Venture Company from large firms.
- Basing Human Resources and Increasing Morale: Most companies reported that they pursued the firm basing of their employees and attempted to increase morale through “remuneration founded heavily on ability and results”. To enhance the employees’ sense of participation they had introduced “self-reporting systems”, “submission systems” and supported the employees in the improvement of their skills and qualifications. Some companies were also committed to the sharing of profits and some had introduced cafeteria-type (remuneration and benefit) plans.
- Human Resource Development: Most of the efforts in human resource development fell under the efforts in performance evaluations in the sense that the evaluations set goals that in reaching meant also the development of the employee’s skills. Most of the companies did not have any formal training in place with most of the learning gained through OJT.
- Employment Type: Many of the different company types were innovative in their handling of different employment types using flex-time, contract-based workers, and discretionary work arrangements.

It is important to note that the rich understanding of the practices described above came from the interviews in the field.

In way of distinguishing the differences found between HRM in large firms and Venture Companies, Yachi (2000) provided the summary of the comparison of HRM in Venture Companies and Large Companies in terms of: Recruiting → job placement and rotation → Evaluation → Promotion and Accession →

Remuneration → Education and Development (p. 65). Yachi's summary is a modification of the flow of HRM functions provided by Ida & Ooshima (1998) (p. 184)

From this study, Yachi (2000) is able to model the Key Factors for Success for Human Resource Management in Venture Companies. The Factors total five and are: (1) Leadership by Top Management and Clearly Articulated Business Undertakings, (2) Originality in the Development of Products and Services, (3) A Flat Organization and Flexible Organization Management, (4) Utilization of Outside Management Resources and Networks, and (5) Enhancing Human Assets by a Hybrid of Different Individual Talents.

This study indicates that when comparing traditional HRM functions between large-size firms and Venture Companies differences exist in the way the functions are implemented and the ideologies that underlay the implementation. Further, it was the interviews in the field that gave the study a richer understanding of the HRM functions in practice. Although much was learnt from this approach, these results open up the question of what further understanding of HRM practices could be obtained if there were also questions that were framed by the field itself thus extending the bounds of traditional HRM research frameworks.

B. Work Style in Japanese Start-up Companies- The "Shigoto-jin" (Hajime Oota)

Hajime Oota conducted a survey of Venture Companies in the cities of Kyoto (October-November 1999) and Osaka (January 2000) (316 companies were sent the survey questionnaire from which a response from 154 companies (48.7%) could be utilized). In an article that focused on differences between large-sized firms and the Venture Companies surveyed by Oota regarding "result-based HRM systems", it was found that although result-based HRM systems existed in Venture Companies, the approach was softer (in comparison to similar systems in particularly the USA) to the point where they could be termed "Japanese-type result-based HRM systems" (Uemoto 2000). This finding was in stark contrast to what was commonly held as characteristic of a Venture Company- i.e. that

Venture Companies would be strictly result orientated. However, as Oota goes on to discuss, going beyond the surface systems and relating the results to the employees, a new understanding emerges.

Oota states that when looking at a deeper or richer level, what stands out is the difference of approaches in work style. Oota explains that especially amongst employees in their 20s and 30s there is a big shift in the way they perceive the company and their work- a shift from the company-orientated worker to the job-orientated worker. For the job-orientated worker, the Venture Company provides an environment conducive to their characteristics- employees who proactively pursue their own careers within their own framework and choose work that brings about self-realization with links between remuneration and results clearly articulated. (Uemoto 2000)

Within this context, Oota provides a richer understanding of the HRM function concerning (results orientated) performance evaluation by stating:

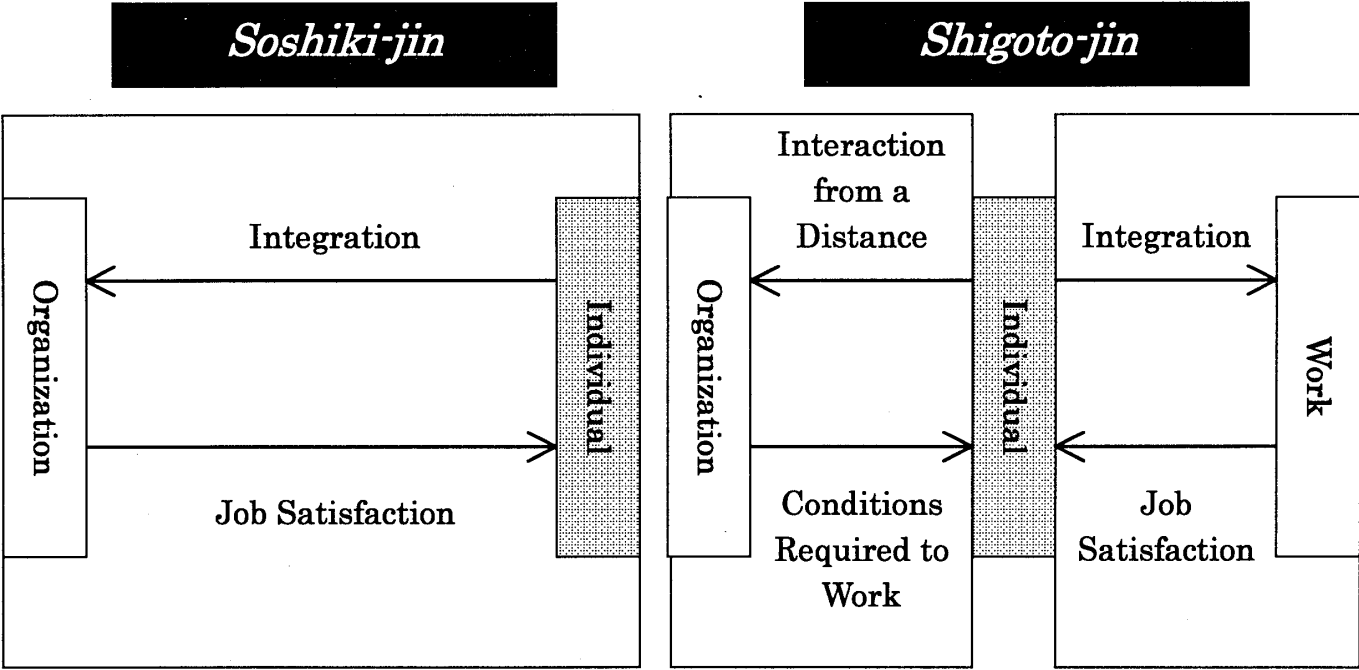
Looking ahead at remuneration and results and the realization of values, if possible a simpler system should be sort. The system should not be the rigid 'Western' type, but rather have a strong basis on individual independence and spontaneity within a Japanese-type corporate climate in which power and authority and remuneration is an individual initiative. Up to the present such a system has not been clearly articulated, but if enacted would meet the needs of (the "*Shigoto-jin*" or the job-orientated worker.) (Uemoto 2000, p. 42)

Oota goes into deeper detail about his insights into the *Shigoto-jin* and the Venture Company in many of his writings. Most noted is his book titled "Bencyaa Kigyou no 'Shigoto'" ('Work' in the Venture Company) (Oota, 2001) with a summarized discussion in Oota (2002).

In describing the *Shigoto-jin* in the Venture Company, Oota (2001) explains that the *Shigoto-jin* represents a marked departure from the traditional notions of

employees in large corporations, especially regarding perceptions (values) and the interaction with work and the organization. The traditional notion that is found in much of the literature about organizational theory could be termed the “*Soshiki-jin*” (organization-orientated worker). The *Soshiki-jin* sees her or his place firmly nested within what has been sketched out by the organization they belong to. All the needs for this worker are satisfied within the organization with any goals and objectives set within this context. The *Shigoto-jin*, on the other hand, has a stronger affinity (integration) with her or his job specialty, rather than with the organization. Career aspirations are geared towards developing the specialty (to however broadly they choose to define it) and have their attention fixed beyond the boundaries of the organization to interact with external customers and markets. Oota (2001) depicts this difference graphically in Figure (1).

Figure 1
The *Soshiki-jin* and *Shigoto-jin* Interactions with the Organization and Work



Source: Oota (2001) P. 52

Oota’s studies, findings and resultant theoretical modeling suggest that to appreciate the deeper context of HRM in Venture Companies that we need to

take a look at the perceptions and attitudes of the employees that work in them. Extending this thinking further, for HRM systems, practices and issues to be truly successful, Venture Companies must go deeper than surface issues and deal with employees at a more tacit level², meaning that they must come to understand the values and perceptions their employees have of work and the company.

C. Lessons Learnt in Developing a Research Framework – A Prologue

As the studies by Yachi (2000) and Oota (Uemoto, 2000) indicated, comparing the traditional functions of HRM in large companies with that of Venture Companies were able to highlight the different nature of the same functions in each type of company. However, it was the interviews with members of selected companies that provided the richer understanding of the data obtained from the large-scale survey questionnaires. In other words, the researchers were able gain deeper insights of the processes that underlay the trends found in the statistical data by grounding their learning in experience in the real field of business operations. Through a combination of both applying traditional HRM frameworks and then pursuing discussions in the field, both Yachi and Oota were able to develop better models in line with the experience of HRM in Venture companies: Yachi with his “Key Factors of Success” and Oota with the awareness of the “*Shigoto-jin*” (job-orientated worker).

By extending the research methods both researchers used and emphasizing the approaches of which findings are grounded in the field, I believe a better understanding of the processes of HRM systems, practices, and issues can be gained. Extending the research methods involves advancement from conventional HRM areas of study to “letting the field speak” or put another way through semi- or unstructured interviews, observations and participation by the researcher her or himself, place the research activities in a context where employees and managers may voice the questions and steer the focus on new areas. Any new

² For a more in-depth look at how one company was able to deal with its employees at a more tacit level and realize the company’s HRM strategy, I refer you to a previous article I have written; McDonald (2004).

insights and learning from this approach, in turn, may provide a new lens to view HRM and thus broaden the traditional understandings of HRM as a whole. In the following section, I outline the framework I have developed in the process of conducting research to meet the above objectives.

4. The Study Framework

Before describing each component and function of the framework, I think it is important to declare the methodology that has educated the methods I present. In essence, when I am discussing my 'approach to researching HRM in Venture Companies', I am referring to both methodology and methods. As Checkland (1999) points out,

... methodology, properly considered, is 'the logos of method', the *principles of method*. When those principles are used to underlie, justify and inform the things which are actually done in response to a particular human problem situation, those actions are at a different level from the overarching principles. Methodology in that situation leads to 'method', in the form of the specific approach adopted, the specific things the methodology user chooses to do in that particular situation. (p. A32)

My methodology has evolved from how I see or approach the world. In stark contrast to the traditional scientific method or positivism, I have come to realize that rather than there being independent or objective "facts" out there in the "real world" waiting to be discovered, that our understanding of the world is constructed that we attach or build our own meanings or understandings of what we experience or perceive. My approach in research then leads to trying to understand what meanings people apply to the world and look at the constructs and processes involving the constructs of meaning. How I see the world, therefore, probably mainly locates me within a methodology that draws from Social Construction (Berger, Peter L. & Thomas Luckman (1967) and Phenomenology (Morgan 2000), amongst other mixes of methodology in other words a pluralist approach. Attempting to outline this and other methodologies I use in detail goes

beyond the scope of this paper, however there is a vast and growing literature into methodologies in Qualitative Research of which the various editions of the Handbook of Qualitative Research provides a good overview. (For example, refer to Denzin, Norman K. & Yvonna S. Lincoln (eds.) (2000)).

Following is a brief description of each component and function of the framework. Rather than viewing the framework as fixed, it is better understood as a collection of processes which through interaction have brought about the eventual formation of the framework presented.

(1) Access (Participative Research)

The main objective of my research is to gain a better understanding of HRM systems, practices, and issues in action in Venture Companies in the actual field. One approach in achieving access to the field to conduct such research is as a participant-observer. As Remenyi, Williams, Money & Swartz (1998) articulate,

using the participant-observer tactic the researcher joins a team of individuals who are part of the phenomenon being studied. The researcher takes part in the phenomenon in the same way as the other participants, but at the same time focuses on observing the way in which the group operates. This research technique is essentially phenomenological in nature. (p. 57)

At the commencement of my research, I first approached presidents of Venture Companies to simply to seek cooperation in conducting interviews with them and their employees. However, after discussing the objectives of my research, the presidents pointed out what other scholars had already noted that Human Resource Management issues were a major concern for them in the operations of their business. As such, and in consideration that I had previously worked for Japanese companies before joining academia, the presidents suggested that I work alongside the other employees and assist them in their work duties as well as be semi-consultant to the president her or himself.

In my background reading of participant-observer based research by other

non-Japanese in Japanese firms, I understood that a very rich understanding of the company could be gained through this “tactic”. Fiona Graham (Graham 2003) used the participant-observer approach in her study of the work practices and company life of employees in a large Japanese mutual insurance company, and provides a good example of the depth and richness and understanding that can be gained. I also understood that as part of the phenomenon I was studying, I would exert some degree of influence. I therefore framed the approach as semi-action research³ (so that I would be continually reflecting on both what was happening around me and the consequences of my own actions.)

After deliberating with the presidents, several ground rules were decided upon. One was that my role as both “employee” (part-time) and “researcher” would be openly declared to all employees and the presidents would ask all employees to help me in my research activities and that the employees should also include me as part of the actual work team. Another ground rule was that all the interviews I conducted would be kept strictly confidential. So, for instance, when performing the role of “consultant” with the president and sharing information about the attitudes and thoughts of the employees, I would paraphrase and share general observations or insights without mentioning the employee(s) that formed the basis of observations.

My position as a pseudo-employee also enabled me to gain access to company documents that could provide the background to understand the conversations and interviews with the employees, management and Company President. My status also meant that I was participant in all project activities including group and company-wide meetings.

(2) Time Frame – Longitudinal Study

Since I would be involved in actual on-going business projects, it was agreed that I would spend one full day a week at the company (more days when possible) for

³ For a detailed description of Action Research, refer to Reason & Bradbury (2001) and especially to Coghlan & Brannick (eds.) (2005) for pursuing research in your own organization.

a period of just over one year. With this time frame, my research was well positioned to be longitudinal (Saldana 2003). A longitudinal study especially suits research that is concerned with processes and the sustainability of actions or initiatives. As my research shared this focus, I decided to pursue the research in line with a longitudinal study.

(3) Formulating Guiding Questions for Employee Interviews

Of particular interest in my research were the attitudes of employees and management towards work and the company. By drawing up a list of questions or themes I could follow in semi-structured interviews with the employees, I felt this would provide me with a lens to understand how the employees saw HRM systems, practices and issues in their company.

Firstly I conducted a review of the literature dealing with mainly Venture Businesses (i.e. the research I reported in Section 3 of this paper). Since studies like Yachi (2000) also drew from traditional HRM frameworks yet were able to gain important insights, I decided I would build upon this approach. I also drew upon my general background as a specialist in HRM studies and from my previous experience of looking at HRM in different types of companies for past research projects.

After drawing up a draft list of questions and themes, I discussed them with the company President to ensure that the questions I planned to ask and the discussions I wanted to pursue would not negatively influence the operations of the company. I was acutely aware that since some of the questions were asking the interviewee to probe and consider the reasons why they worked for the company and their feelings and concerns about their work and the company, I would be artificially raising within each employee a consciousness about their work in the company which could lead to some form of negative action. Through a process of discussions with the President⁴, the list of questions was approved for

⁴ The President of the case study I present in this paper particularly wanted me ask each employee why liked or disliked working for the company and what it is they expected from the company.

non-managerial employees and for employees in management positions. As the study progressed the questions changed in accordance with newer insights gained from interviews. In the Appendix is a list of questions used for the semi-structured interviews with non-managerial employees closer to the start of the research project. (Questions with managerial employees covered most of the same questions but also focused on job roles of a manager. For instance nurturing and developing subordinate skills, discussions and feedback systems with employees and the President, and so on.)

Several weeks into the research project, one of the employees I interviewed decided to quit the company to start his own business. At that point I realized I also needed to draw up an additional set of questions to guide discussions with employees that had declared their intent to quit the company. These questions were also approved by the company President.

(4) Conducting Employee & Middle-Management Interviews – Initial Stages of Grounded Theory Approach

Approaching the questions as general guidelines for semi-structured interviews in which there was to be a great amount of flexibility to explore issues as they arose in the discussion falls within the plan to use the qualitative research method known as “grounded theory”. Grounded theory is a popular qualitative method in sociology and social/health care research, but is being applied more recently in management and organizational studies also (Locke 2001). Although different strands of the method exist today, I chose to use the guidelines outlined by one of founders of Grounded Theory, Anselm Strauss (Strauss & Corbin 1998), however within a constructivist approach⁵.

⁵ As Charmaz (2000) points out, “... postmodernists and poststructuralists dispute obvious and subtle positivistic premises assumed by grounded theory’s major proponents and within the logic of the method itself.” (p. 510) Since my methodological stance is non-positivistic this creates a problem in utilizing grounded theory as part of my research framework. However, as Charmaz (2000) goes on to argue, grounded theory can be also used in a constructionist approach, “... which takes a middle ground between postmodernism and positivism” (p. 510) and thus in the end proves a useful tool in my research framework.

Since it is beyond the scope of this paper to describe in detail the guidelines and philosophy of the approach, stated simply, (and drawing from the summary by Borgatti (2006)), Grounded Theory is a method to develop theory inductively from data obtained from the field (in various forms as documents, transcripts of interviews, field notes of observations and so on). The method involves reading through data you have collected and labeling the variables that you discover (through open coding, axial coding and selective coding). The process is ongoing as the method requires that you continually compare and interact with the data obtained until no new variables appear and thus you reach a saturation point. In the process of comparing variables you are also attempting to find relationships which is known as “theoretical sensitivity”.

During the course of the day I would find an opportune time to ask each employee and manager to participate in an interview. On average, each interview lasted between one to two hours and all interviews were recorded. As I have already explained, the questions I had prepared were to act as guidelines, which meant there was great flexibility in what was discussed. If I sensed the employee was keen to spend time talking in depth about certain issues, I let the discussion flow with what the employee wanted to share. As such, I was able to cover many other issues that had not been mentioned in the literature review, and gain deeper appreciation of the issues concerning the employee.

After each day, the recorded interviews were transcribed and I commenced the initial process involved in grounded theory by identifying and labeling concepts and themes that I came across in the transcripts. I also keep a record of my thoughts about each of the labels and related them to my notes from my participatory observations. Further, during the interviews, a number of employees also expressed themselves using diagrammatic representations. These diagrams were helpful in my own modeling of emerging themes and concepts. I also made notes of particular concepts and wording used by the employee so that I could investigate and probe them more at a deeper level and try to understand how the employee constructed them from their thinking and experience.

(5) Discussions with the Company President

Discussions with the Company President usually took the form of (a) a recap of events and incidents over the past week that the president viewed as important, (b) a discussion of corporate strategic issues (including discussions surrounding management philosophy and corporate culture) with a special focus on how she or he perceived the issues would effect the company employees, (c) brainstorming over HRM issues and practices and (d) probing and questioning of issues and themes that emerged from my interviews with employees and middle management. The discussions were mainly unstructured, except for the discussions about the issues that emerged from the interviews with the employees. However, even then, I let the discussion take its course in line with what the president was most concerned or interested in. These discussions usually lasted between one to two hours and were usually held one day each week.

According to the conditions of gaining access to the company, one of the roles I had to perform was as a semi-HRM consultant- which mainly involved me being a “sounding board” for new HRM practices, initiatives, or directives the President was considering implementing. This role as “sounding board” enabled me to directly observe the thinking processes of the President and understand how the thinking was transformed into concrete action plans. During the times I was a “sounding board”, I was able to provide feedback in the form of describing how employees may react in accordance to the insights I had gained from the interviews. At other times I was able to provide general information from the field of Human Resource Management theory to assist the President in framing his thinking. By the end of each discussion, the President had usually developed a list of issues he needed to ponder further. I would bring up during the discussion the following week what conclusions or thinking he had come up with regarding the outstanding issues.

As a longitudinal study, I was able to trace from week to week the effectiveness of any plans the President had put in place and learn from his perspective what was effective and what could be improved upon. When I was working on the work

floor with other employees and saw the President enacting some of the plans he had discussed with me, I made sure I noted the responses from the employees and followed the interaction between the President and the employees.

Along with the discussions, I continually sort documentation (including books, literature from training sessions the President had attended and so on) and any other sources of information provided by people in contact with the President so I could get a wider picture of some of the different influences on the President's thinking. This information proved very useful when writing up my own observation notes after each of the discussions. Each discussion with the President was taped, but not entirely transcribed. I re-listened to the taped discussions to check over my own notes and be in a more detached position to think analytically about some of the issues raised in the discussions.

The research framework I described above evolved with the level of understanding I was able to obtain through interviews, observations and reading company documents. Each component of the framework was interactive with the whole framework and I was acutely aware that to maintain a proper balance I needed to adjust the mechanisms of each component in line with the changes the company was going through. At times this meant holding off on interviewing employees when new critical changes to job positions were put in place and instead focusing on deeper analytical discussions with the President. Then once some time had past and the employee was more comfortable in her or his new position, the interviewing would recommence.

5. The Study Framework in Action - Some Preliminary Findings

In this section, I highlight some events that give an insight into how the research framework operated in practice. At the same time, the insights give a sense of the learning and richer understanding that can be gained from using the framework. As the research framework recognizes the unique situation that each company operates in i.e. a contingency approach the discussion will focus on one case

study- “Company A”⁶.

A. Background of Case Study Company - “Company A”

To appreciate the context of the issues I discuss, I think it is important to provide a brief background about Company A.

Company A was established in the year 2000 as a wholly Japanese-owned subsidiary of a foreign company who had its headquarters in Oceania. The company is involved in the Information Technology (IT) industry with business operations centering on the Internet (using the standard Internet PC-based technology as well as mobile, especially cell phones). The company’s specialization is in servicing end-users (consumers) (Business-to-Consumer = “B-to-C”) and other companies (Business-to-Business = B-to=B) involved in the area of photography and graphics. During the initial years, the company underwent rapid growth and was featured in the print and electronic media as the leading company in its field. However, after the global bust of the Internet Economy the company’s overseas headquarters ceased operations. Despite the downturn in the Internet Economy, Company A managed to survive and is focusing on its core technical competencies to extend its operations in a related area of business that no other company has yet pioneered. The company has seen a high rate of turnover in staff compared to larger companies, but at the same time is probably relatively similar to other Venture Companies. As of February, 2006, the company had a total of 20 employees, including the President of which one employee is hired on a contract basis and another as a dispatch worker from a human bank. All the other employees are working on a “regular” full-time basis and the average age is in the early 30s. In early February the president changed the organization of the company so that it now has five sections: 3 directly involved in sales, one in technical support and services and the remaining section

⁶ In compliance with the company’s request for confidentiality, the pseudonym “Company A” is used. All other details and events discussed in this paper are factual. I would like to offer my greatest appreciation to the President and all the staff of Company A in supporting me in my research. I am especially thankful to the company for enabling me complete access and making me feel a part of the team. Further, I am deeply impressed for their spirit of sharing so that other companies, employees and scholars may learn from Company A’s experience.

concerned with general corporate administration. The number of middle managers is five, however there is also a semi-management position of “leader” of which four employees hold.

B. The Shigoto-jin and Entrepreneurial Aspirations

Nearly all the employees I interviewed had very clear aspirations of starting their own business in the future. For these types of employees, a Venture Company provides a rich “real-life training ground” to develop the skills necessary to start their own business. As one employee stated:

I possess specialist technical skills, but lack the skills to start my own business. A Venture Company provides me with a good environment to develop such skills. (Systems Engineer, Male, 35 years old).

By probing this employee further, I was able to learn in more depth what it was about a Venture Company that offered this opportunity in comparison to other types of companies. Here the same employee responded:

A Venture Company has to always be pursuing new business projects (to survive.) ... (Also because of the small number of employees) your job is not confined within a strict hierarchical unit, but instead is broader in scope meaning that you are exposed to different and a greater variety of tasks (that go beyond my specialty forcing me to deal with general business issues). ... All this leads to a greater amount of learning and self-development.
(Systems Engineer, Male, 35 years old).

I probed why he chose Company A in particular to work for and he responded:

It doesn't really matter which company you are in, providing you can perform the work you want to.
(Systems Engineer, Male, 35 years old).

This same comment was echoed amongst nearly all the other employees. For instance, one employee, who did not have any entrepreneurial aspirations but was wanting to become a specialist in her field, stated:

(When I first chose Company A) it didn't really matter which company I worked for. What was important was for me (was to have the chance) in becoming a specialist. I think it would be good if the company became more well-known, but I hold more pride in my work (as a specialist) than with the company itself.

(Customer Support Specialist, Female, 26 years old).

In reflecting upon the interviews, I was surprised at how outspoken the employees were about their aspirations to start their own business in the future. Especially in light of one employee saying:

I stated very clearly at the interview with the President my ultimate aspirations to start up my own business in the future ... It is not only with this present company that I shared at the interview my entrepreneurial aspirations, I have said the same thing to all companies I have had interviews with.

(Systems Engineer, Male, 35 years old).

Since the employee was essentially communicating to the President at the actual interview that once he had learned enough to start his own business he would leave the company, I probed the President as to why he would choose an employee like this. The President responded by stating:

Firstly, I am exactly this type of person. I first worked for a large company, but also had very strong entrepreneurial aspirations. I learnt as much as I could then left the company to start up my own. ... Secondly, our company needs to always be opening the way for new business, and as such it is employees that have a strong entrepreneurial drive that I seek. ... This is something I look for in

employees during the interviews.

(President of Company A).

During the interview with the Systems Engineer, I also learnt that being in an organization with very loose hierarchical job boundaries also opened the way to networking, which he viewed as essential for his work and for starting his own business in the future. His thoughts of networking were very rich. For instance he explained that:

Networking is much more than having a list of personal contacts, networking is a process that requires much skill. (Firstly) to perform work it is necessary to appreciate and use the connections you have with people. It involves first gaining the cooperation of one person then the process moves on to another personal contact. (In essence) networking is like accumulating a hand of cards. You must then determine in your own mind what needs to be done to achieve a work goal using the personal connections to reach the goal. During this whole process you must be able to mentally work through these processes at a very fast speed.

(Systems Engineer, Male, 35 years old).

The discussion above highlights the nature that Oota (2001) refers to as the *Shigoto-jin*. The *Shigoto-jin* in Company A all viewed the company through their work and were independently developing their own careers within their own life-time frameworks, not the companies. As was seen with the Systems Engineer, breaking out of the regimented job boundaries and forming networks is not only necessary for the *Shigoto-jin* it is also a process that requires skill. This new understanding gained about networking could mean in terms of HRM that employees need what I might coin “networking competencies”.

Since it was understood that the employees with entrepreneurial aspirations would eventually leave the company, in one brainstorming session with the President we discussed the possibility of creating a “business spin-out system”.

With this system, at the time the employee declares her or his intent to leave the company, the employee, depending on the business model/plan, is offered funding and use of Company A's various assets to start their own business. In this way, Company A still has a stake in the employee and the potential for Company A to grow. The employee in turn gains access to finance and the other necessary infrastructural assets that are so often difficult for starting-out entrepreneurs to acquire. The system was implemented and there is currently one employee who is making use of this system.

As the above description of the study framework in action indicates, qualitative approaches are able to get beyond surface trends of large-scale questionnaires to appreciate how the thinking of the issues is constructed. As an ongoing study, I am required to conduct follow-up interviews with the each employee to probe deeper some of the concepts and to draw out new issues. For instance, with the Systems Engineer I quoted above, my follow up interview would try to determine why it is that he had such an articulate comprehension of networking. I would want to know what informed his thinking and to what degree he actually comprehends the thinking.

Further, the action-based foundations of the study lead the way to understandings that became the basis of change to the HRM system itself. This is illustrated in the manner in which the "business spin-out system" was formulated and implemented.

C. Organizational Change, Corporate Culture & Job Role Clashes

Since I first started research in Company A just over eight months ago, the organizational structure had gone through both gradual change and major overhauls. When looking at organizational charts on paper, they often appear neat and tidy and give the appearance that the company is in good order with the charts representing organizational designs to achieve well thought out corporate strategy. However, as Cross & Parker (2004) state,

... put an organizational chart in front of most employees, from line

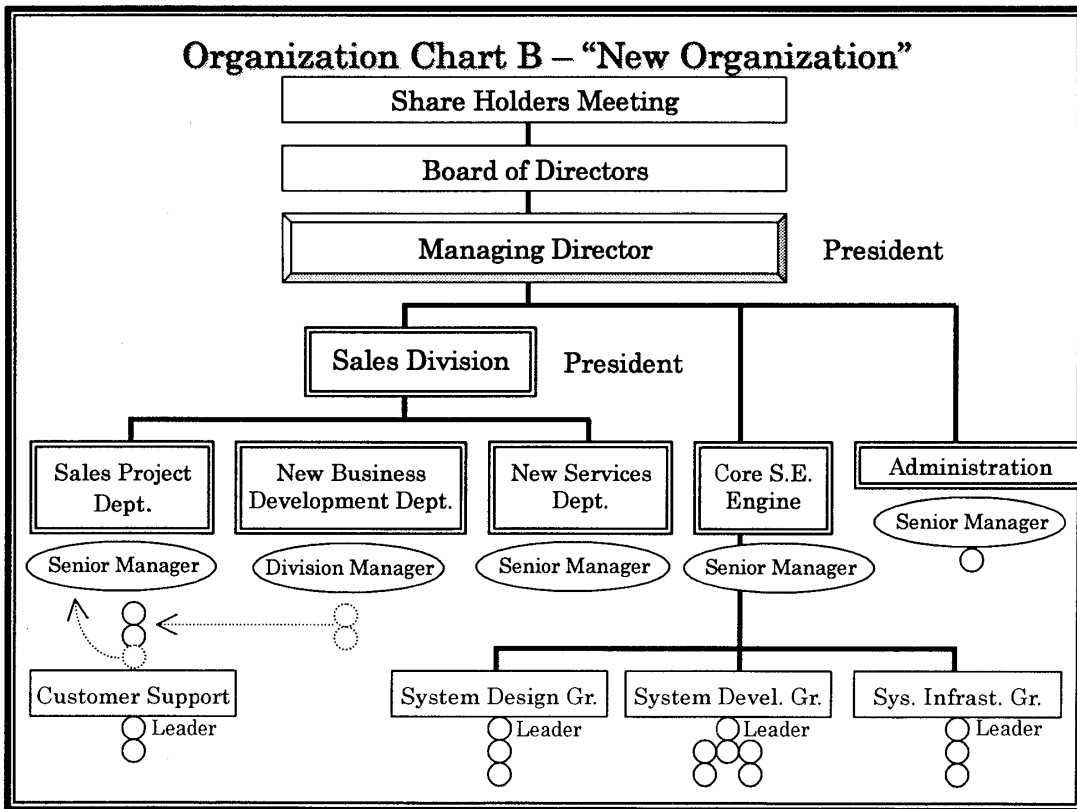
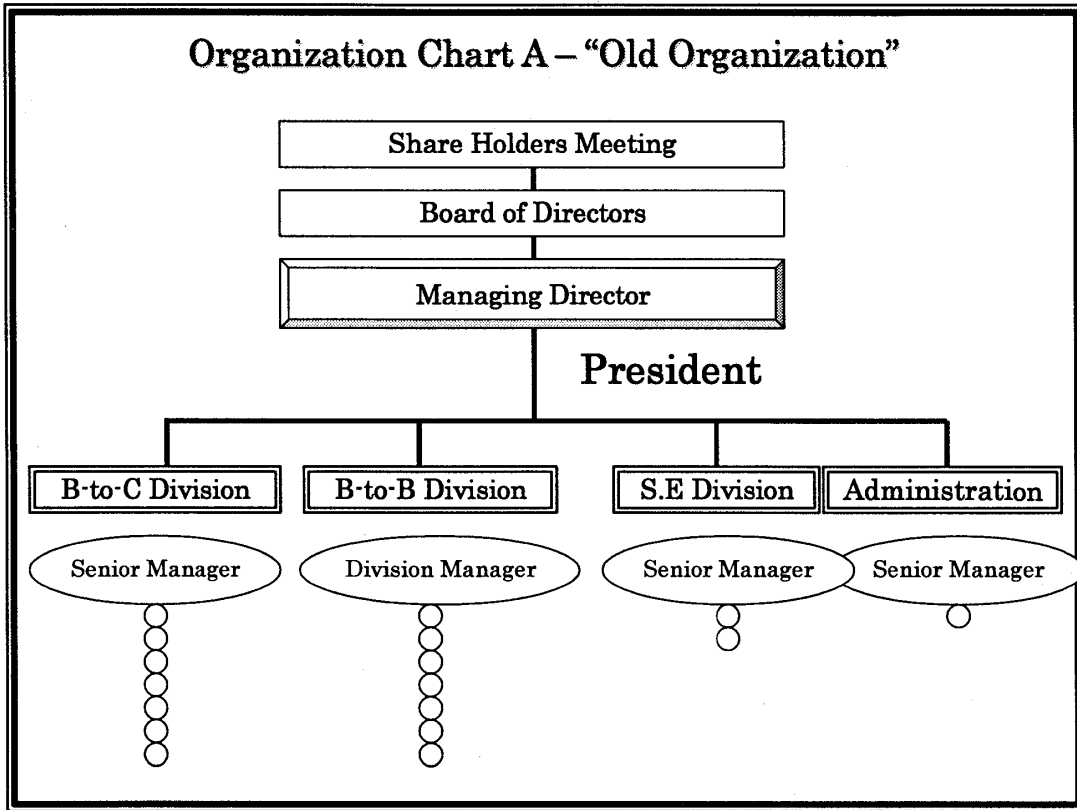
workers to executives, and they will tell you that the lines do not really capture the way work gets done in their organization. But most will be quick to acknowledge the critical influence that networks of informal relationships have on work and innovation of any importance. (p. vii)

Figure (2) displays an organizational chart that was introduced by Company A in February 2006 and the organizational chart before the new organization was implemented. (“A” being the old organization chart (which I will refer to as the “Old Organization”) and “B” being the new organization chart that was introduced in February 2006 (which I will refer to as the “New Organization”). Although one motivation for the change in organizational structure was to prepare the company for entering a new area of business yet to be pioneered by any other company, from my participant observations and lengthy discussions with the President, the change also represents the need to deal with corporate culture and job role clashes, especially as they pertain to middle management.

According to the Old Organization, the company was divided into four divisions: (1) a sales division dealing with B-to-C, (2) another sales division dealing with B-to-B, (3) a small-sized systems engineering division and a (3) general corporate administration division. Each of these divisions were headed by senior or division managers who reported directly to the (4) Company President. Hierarchically above the President were a Board of Directors and the Share Holders Committee. Both Divisions (1) and (2) contained a sales force and systems engineers to support the technical side of the projects.

Before this Old Organization, the President had an open semi-office situated on the same floor as the middle management and the subordinate employees. So there was much direct interaction between not only the President and middle management, but with the subordinate employees as well. This situation was a carry on from the roots of the company as a very small team with the President holding the role of both top management and middle management. However, since the organization was growing, the President decided to rent another floor in

Figure 2
Old & New Organization Charts of "Company A"



the office building and move there together with the general corporate administrative division. The thinking was that since he now had middle-management, he wanted to nurture them and have them deal with the day-to-day issues while the President could concentrate on the whole running of the company. The Old Organization chart had represented this change.

On paper, the Old Organization articulated well how the President had hoped the company would function. However, not long after introducing the Old Organization a couple of issues concerning HRM arose; (1) subordinate dissatisfaction with their boss's management style and clashes of personal work styles held by new middle-management that had been inherited from the socialization in previous companies with that of the corporate culture⁷ of Company A (that had been nurtured over the six years Company A had been in existence) and (2) unarticulated middle-management job roles that did not reflect the actual competencies held by these managers.

Subordinate Dissatisfaction with Bosses Management Style & Corporate Culture Clashes

One middle manager in particular had a style of management that was very top-bottom, strict and geared to obtaining short-term goals very quickly. As could be gathered from the interview with employees, Company A was most attractive to its employees because it was flexible in regards to work style and let the employees determine independently how to achieve broad goals. However, the particular middle-manager was demanding his subordinates obtain certain sales figures and work in ways he dictated.

Since the subordinates were no longer in direct contact with the President, they were unsure if what their boss was asking them to do was what the President was really expecting of them. The way they were being forced to work went

⁷ For an articulate and easy-to-understand discussion of Corporate Culture refer to Schein (1999). At the risk of oversimplifying the concept, the definition of Corporate Culture I discuss in this paper draws from Schein's (1999) statement that "... the essence of (corporate) culture (are) jointly learned values, beliefs, and assumptions that shared and taken for granted as the organization continues to be successful". (p. 20)

against the way the subordinates had worked with the President in the past and they grew very dissatisfied with the company. Eventually the employees confronted the President directly to voice their dissatisfaction. It was then that the President realized that there was indeed a very different reality on the workplace floor to what he had wanted. In essence, what the President was communicating to the manager was being misconstrued when communicated to the subordinate employees, bringing about detrimental results. If the situation continued, the President could foresee a large number of the employees who had been with the company for several years quitting.

Another manager had a different management style, but did not create any problems regarding the employees. However, in the President's eyes, though this manager was very innovative and creative, he was way too "hands off" in guiding his subordinates towards new challenges. In a sense, it was the extreme opposite management style to the manager described above.

In discussions with the President over this issue, one point we both realized was that as the two managers in question were new to Company A, they did not know both consciously and inherently the type of culture the President had developed with the subordinate employees over several years. How the managers were "managing" (management style) was very much in line with the cultures they had been socialized into in the companies they had worked for previously. So one cause of the problem was that the President had put in a position of authority managers that did not inherently share the same corporate culture of Company A.

Job Role Clashes

Another issue that arose was related to job roles⁸. The President had hired both

⁸ My use of the term "job role" differs to the traditional notion of a job. The traditional view of a job is as "... a unit in an organization structure that remains unchanged whoever is in the job" (Armstrong 2003, p.337). As Armstrong goes on to point out, this view is mechanical and does not equip the individual in meeting the day-to-day realities of organizational life. Armstrong (2003) notes that a role concerns "... the part people play in carrying out their work". (p. 337). As Ling (2002) points out, a role is a much broader definition than job because

managers to fill the position of manager. In reflection, however, he had not fully taken into consideration the role of “manager”. Because the President wanted his company to grow he was in search of people who were aggressively entrepreneurial and possessed the traits of being creative and innovative. In his eagerness and joy in finding such employees, he had not been too concerned during the recruiting stage of the managers-to-be of their actual experience in managing a team of employees. For Company A, managing the employees meant not simply reporting back to the President the sales results, but also creating an environment that encouraged the employees to seek out their own self-development and work styles while at the same time reaching the goals of the company.

When some subordinate employees approached the President and asked that a certain co-worker be promoted to boss and have them working under the newly promoted boss, it made the President realize that there was a clash in job roles. Although the people the President had put into management positions were “aggressively entrepreneurial and possessed the traits of being creative and innovative”, they lacked the other traits necessary of a middle manager. With the prompting of the subordinate employees, the President realized that the co-worker the subordinates were asking to be promoted to manager possessed the traits missing in the existing managers. But the President faced a dilemma. He did not want to lose the people he had made managers because they were proving very apt in creativity and entrepreneurial drive. But he also needed people who could properly nurture and fulfill the proper role of manager

The New Organization

In consideration of the above issues, the President came up with the New Organization chart. In short, the two managers in question were made head of two new sections of which they themselves were the only members. The thinking was with their creativity and drive they could pursue new businesses and he would hire new employees to help them in their work as their business ventures

of the focus on “carrying out work”. (p. 46)

grew. In one sense he had made them “free agents”⁹ within the company. He also created a section that was to continue with the on-going projects and develop and transform these projects to cutting-edge endeavors. He made the subordinate who several employees wanted to be promoted manager of the section.

The President also used the timing to restructure the System Engineering Department so that it would form a core competency for the company. All projects, both new and old, would be able to utilize system components developed by the team of specialist engineers as needed in their projects. This system was to be cutting edge and geared for the changes the President could foresee for his area of business. After making the announcement, I raised an issue with the President about the work values held by many of the System Engineers. As quoted earlier in this paper, there were engineers who joined Company A because they had the opportunity to work outside of strict specialist job boundaries. With the organizational change, these types of employees would be placed in work hierarchies they wanted to avoid. The President then started to consider ways of taking away any boundaries and involving all System Engineers in both technical *and* business/sales work.

As indicated by the example above, participant observation based within a framework of action research opened up the way for understanding some of the *processes* involved in organizational change. On paper, organizational change is often communicated as an articulation of a well-thought out strategic plan. However, as seen from this example of the study framework in action, the actual implementation is messy with HRM often playing a major role. As a longitudinal study, the research framework also paves the way for understanding the “sustainability of actions or initiatives” implemented during the course of the study.

⁹ For a discussion about “free agents” in the business and organizational context refer to Gould, Weiner & Levin (1997)

6. Conclusion

This paper sketched and illustrated in action a research framework to investigate HRM systems, practices and issues in Venture Companies in Japan. Although large-scale questionnaires covering a broad range of Venture Companies can highlight the major trends or issues faced by managers and employees, it is qualitative approaches that focus on particular cases over a longer time-frame that can bring about a better understanding of the processes beneath the trends and issues. Understanding the nature of the processes does not simply recognize the differences with large-scale counterparts, it better equips both the managers and employees with developing HRM systems and practices that are more in line with the deep-seated values and perspectives of the employees that these practices are implemented upon.

Gaining a better understanding of both the effectiveness of the processes of HRM practices in the field and employee interactions with these processes can open up the way to newer insights about HRM in general and advance HRM theory. As the research on which this framework is being applied is currently ongoing, more planning will have to take place so that better models (or theories) of understanding can be formulated. These models would need to articulate the richness of the data grounded in real-life field experience.

As Venture Companies open up their organizations to incorporate researchers as part of a team to new learning and organizational development, the researcher too must open her or his mind to the unexpected and new insights, pushing beyond traditional theoretical boundaries. This endeavor is in line with the very nature of what sustains the vitality of Venture Companies themselves, "to be undaunted by risk when taking on the challenge of entering new domains".

References

- Armstrong, Michael (2003) *A Handbook of Human Resource Management Practice: 9th Edition*, London: Kogan Page Limited.
- Berger, Peter L. & Thomas Luckmann (1967) *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*, New York: Anchor Books
- Borgatti, Steve (2006) *Introduction to Grounded Theory*. Retrieved February 26, 2006, from <http://www.analytictech.com/mb870/introGT.htm>
- Checkland, Peter (1999) *Systems Thinking, Systems Practice*, Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.
- Charmaz, Kathy (2000) "Grounded Theory: Objectivist and Constructivist Methods" in Denzin, Norman K. & Yvonna S. Lincoln (eds.) *Handbook of Qualitative Research: Second Edition*, Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications, Inc. pp. 509-535.
- Coghlan, David & Teresa Brannick (2005) *Doing Action Research in Your Own Organization: Second Edition*, London: Sage Publications Ltd.
- Cross, Rob & Andrew Parker (2004) *The Hidden Power of Social Networks: Understanding How Work Really Gets Done in Organizations*, Boston, Massachusetts: Harvard Business School Press.
- Denzin, Norman K. & Yvonna S. Lincoln (eds.) (2000) *Handbook of Qualitative Research: Second Edition*, Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Gould, Susan B., Kerry J. Weiner & Barbara R. Levin (1997) *Free Agents: People and Organizations Creating a New Working Community*, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers
- Iida, Osamu & Sachiyo Ooshima (1998) *Bencyaa-gata Ningen no*

Tsukurikata/Sodatekata: Kigyuu/Koudou Taipu Betsu Datsu Oote no Jinzai Manejimento” (Developing and Nurturing Start-up Company-type Employees: In Accord with Company & Behavior type- Casting Away Human Resource Management for Large Companies), Tokyo: Daiyamondo-sha

Ling, Lin Li (2002) “HRM no Naka de no Hyoka to Shigoto” (“Rethinking the Concept of Work in HRM Performance Evaluations”) in *Keikenronshu*, Daito Bunka University Graduate School of Economics, No. 19. pp. 39-54

Matsuda, Shuuichi (2005) *Benchyaa Kigyuu: Dai 3 Pan (Venture Companies: 3rd Edition)*, Tokyo: Nihonkeizaishimnunsha (Nikkei Bukou 1069). (In Japanese)

McDonald, Darren M. (2004) “Closing the Gap Between Rhetoric and Reality in Human Resource Management Strategy: The Case Study of a Japanese Manufacturer”, in *Keieironshu*, Institute of Business Research Daito Bunka University, September, No. 8. pp. 103-116.

NRI Amerika/Babuson Daigaku (2001) *Kooporeeto Antopurenaashippu: Kigyuu no Henkatekiouryoku wo Takameru (Corporate Entrepreneurship: Increasing the Corporation’s Ability to Adapt to Change)*, Tokyo: Nomurasougoukebkyyuusho (In Japanese)

Oota, Hajime (2001) *Benchyaa Kigyuu no ‘Shigoto’ (‘Work’ in the Venture Company)*, Tokyo: Chuoukouronshinsha.

Reason, Peter & Hilary Bradbury (2001) *Handbook of Action Research: Participative Inquiry and Practice*, London: Sage Publications Ltd.

Remenyi, Dan, Brian Williams, Arthur Money & Ethne Swartz (1998) *Doing Research in Business and Management: An Introduction to Process and Method*, London: Sage Publications, Ltd.

Shein, Edgar H. (1999) *The Corporate Culture Survival Guide: Sense and*

Nonsense About Culture Change, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Uemoto, Yoko (2000) “Bencyaa Kigyoo no Kouyo to Jinjiseido; Seikashugi ni ha Sansei, Demo Jittai ha Nihonteki Noryokushugi – Shiga Daigaku Keizai Gakubu Oota Hajime Kenkyushitsu no Chousa kara (“Employment and Personnel Systems in Venture Companies: Support for Result-Orientated (HRM) but In Reality a Japanese-style of Ability-Orientated HRM – Findings from a Research Survey Out of the Research Office of Hajime Oota”), *Jinzaikyoiku*, July. Pp. 40-42 (In Japanese)

Waseda Daigaku Antoreprenuuru Kenkyukai (Waseda University Entrepreneurial Research Unit (ed.) (2002) *Bencyaa Kigyoo no Keiei to Shien (The Management and Support of Start-up Companies)*, Tokyo: Nihonkeizaishimbunsha. (In Japanese)

Yachi, Atsuhiko (2000) “Bencyaa Kigyoo no Seikoyoin (KFS) to Jintekishigenkanri: Hiaringu Chosa wo Chushin ni” (“(Key) Factors of Success (KFS) in Start-up Companies and Human Resource Management: Findings of an Interview Survey), *Keieironshu*, Bunkyo Gakuin daigaku Sogo Kenkyujo, 10 (1), December, pp. 53-66. (In Japanese)

Zaidanhoujin Kouyoujouhousentaa (Foundation Employment Information Center) (1999) *Seichosangyoubunya ni okeru Kouyou Shisutemu no Doukou ni kansuru Chousakenkyuhokokusho (A Research Report into the Shifts in Employment Systems of Growing Companies)*, Tokyo: Zaidanhoujin Kouyoujouhousentaa, March. (In Japanese)