

Foreword

Successful businesses of all kinds have one common denominator: the ability to attract, develop, and retain top talent. This is especially true in Information Technology (IT), where top-drawer talent properly applied to solving business problems differentiates the winners from the also-rans, and where decisions about IT talent impact the ability of companies to compete effectively in their respective marketplaces. For this reason, the most important skill an executive or manager can possess is effective IT human resource management.

Human resources management is “the art and science of allocating human resources among various projects or business units; maximizing the utilization of available personnel resources to achieve business goals; and performing the activities that are necessary in the maintenance of that workforce through identification of staffing requirements, planning and oversight, education and professional development, and administering their work-life needs” (Wikipedia). If you think about it, this really describes the core attributes of success in almost any endeavor. However, it has particular relevance for the IT knowledge worker, due in part to the unique needs of IT professionals, but also because successful application of these principles correlates with the success of the enterprise.

Just as people are different, so are enterprises. Readers whose enterprise’s rely directly on technology to successfully compete in the marketplace will find greater importance in what Dr. Luftman and his colleagues have to say in “Managing Information Technology Human Resources.” Executives and managers in companies that compete on the basis of technology, use technology to differentiate themselves in the marketplace, and/or rely on technology to achieve efficiency will find this book to be extraordinarily valuable. Companies who do not materially rely on technology to compete, differentiate and/or achieve efficiencies will find this book less valuable, but fewer and fewer successful companies today that fall into that category.

IT personnel are generally highly skilled, very marketable knowledge workers with unique needs and motivations, while sharing many of the same general needs as other people in the workforce. Dr. Luftman and his colleagues help readers decipher the unique needs of the IT knowledge worker and give us the key insights necessary to apply them to the demanding business problems of today. Nothing else that we can do or learn will provide a bigger payback than the efficient and effective management of IT human resources.

I have spent 25 years managing large IT departments in four different industries (railroad, airline, utility, and entertainment), and I have found that the single common denominator for success in these diverse environments is, without a doubt, the efficient and effective management of human resources. I have also had the pleasure of knowing and working closely with Dr. Luftman during much of that time, and I have developed a great deal of respect for the knowledge and insights that he has brought to

the IT profession over the years. His extensive, informed insights and those of his colleagues are now available to all of us in his latest book.

“Managing Information Technology Human Resources” is a seminal work in the modern philosophy and practice of managing people, the most important of all IT resources. Starting with trends in skills/careers and development, moving through various aspects of recruiting and retaining talent, and finishing with contemporary executive perspectives, it provides practitioners and researchers with the insights and knowledge required for success. Highly relevant case studies illustrate the application of the core principles advocated by the impressive list of contributors to this book.

Dr. Luftman and the colleagues who have collaborated with him on this essential guide are all experienced IT professionals with many years of experience in IT and industry. Their collective wisdom should make this book essential reading for managers at all levels and in all fields, and their expertise is particularly applicable to IT professionals. I highly recommend this guide to those of us in IT and other fields who work with and manage people—and that means just about all of us!

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