Chapter VI

Human Resource Portals and the Protean Career: A Three-Factor Model

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Abstract

This chapter discusses the role of human resource portals in the management of the protean career. A protean career is a career that is frequently changing due to both changes in the person’s interests, abilities, and values, and changes in the work environment. The chapter develops a three-factor model, which contends that three types of variables (individual attributes, characteristics of the human resource portals, and organizational factors) influence the effective use of Web-based human resource services. The model also argues that the effective use of Web-based human resource services plays an important role in the management of the protean career since employees act as free agents, responsible for
Introduction

Careers have been traditionally conceived as linear trajectories where employees advance hierarchically within a single organization over the course of their working lives (Eby, Butts, & Lockwood, 2003). The traditional career is a linear one, measuring success through upward promotions and salary increases. Recently, however, evolving organizational forms are moving workers away from traditional career patterns that emphasized upward progression within a limited number of traditional, pyramid-type organizations to nontraditional career patterns (Sullivan, Carden, & Martin, 1998). Careers are no longer limited to positions in one organization, but rather are viewed as more diversified professional experiences entailing working in different organizations and in different occupations. Hall (1996) and Mirvis and Hall (1996) used the construct of protean career to describe such career patterns. A protean career is a career that is frequently changing due to both changes in the person’s interests, abilities, and values, and changes in the work environment (Hall, 1996). No longer do we expect a lifetime career to involve working in a single occupation or for a single employer (Jackson, 1996).

The purpose of this chapter is to shed light on the role of human resource portals in managing the protean career. In so doing, the chapter develops a three-factor model of the impact of human resource portals on the management of the protean career. The chapter is divided into five sections. The first section discusses the reasons leading to the emergence of the protean career. The second section explains the protean career. The third section describes HR portals. The fourth section presents the three-factor model of the protean career, which contends that three types of variables—organizational factors, HR portals system, and individual attributes—influence the effective use of Web-based HR services. Effective use of Web-based HR services plays an important role in the management of the protean career since employees act as free agents, responsible for their own career advancement opportunities. Finally, the fifth section discusses the model’s implications for research and practice.
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