

The Emergence of the Behavioural Sciences

In response to the highly calculative approach adopted by the Scientific School, a human relations school of thought emerged in the 1940s which challenged Taylorism's belief in formal work structures and the over simplification of motivation. In contrast, the Human relations Era focused on the behaviour of people at work and argued that informal work groups and the management style of line management influenced performance. As a result the personnel management function began to focus on matching the needs of employees with those of management, through the creation of informal structures and managerial styles.

The Labour Relations Era

Trade unions in Ireland, prior to the 1900s, were largely confined to the crafts. It was not until a number of Dublin-based employers attempted to break the hold of the trade unions during the 1913 lockout that management and labour began to formally organise themselves in large numbers. Despite the surge in union membership, the management of labour relations remained largely ad hoc until the 1950s.. The introduction of national wage rounds galvanised the central role that pay bargaining held at that time. The overall effect of these developments was to force personnel managers to specialise in the area of industrial and labour relations.

Post World War

Following the Second World War the role occupied by Personnel Management developed and expanded as negotiations became more sophisticated and extended beyond issues of pay to the terms and conditions of employment. As new employment legislation was introduced, the personnel function assumed an advisory role on issues pertaining to employment law.

The 1980s –1990s

By the 1980s, as the Irish economy began to enter an economic recession, employment retrenchment came to the fore of management agendas. From an organisational perspective, the central focus of management became the shedding of peripheral businesses, as organisations sought to return to their core businesses. For the personnel function, the focus shifted towards issues of redundancy. Moreover, during this period, the losses in trade union membership, which were associated with the rise in unemployment, facilitated the introduction of more

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