

**The Emerald Handbook of Work,  
Workplaces and Disruptive Issues in  
HRM**

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# **The Emerald Handbook of Work, Workplaces and Disruptive Issues in HRM**

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United Kingdom – North America – Japan – India – Malaysia – China

Emerald Publishing Limited  
Howard House, Wagon Lane, Bingley BD16 1WA, UK

First edition 2022

Editorial matter and selection © 2022 Peter Holland, Timothy Bartram, Thomas Garavan and Kirsteen Grant.

Individual chapters © 2022 The authors.

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**British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data**

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: 978-1-80071-780-0 (Print)

ISBN: 978-1-80071-779-4 (Online)

ISBN: 978-1-80071-781-7 (Epub)



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ISO 14001:2004.



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# Foreword

A bend in the road is not the end of the road... Unless you fail to make the turn.

–Helen Keller, in *The Story of My Life*, 1903

Like Helen Keller, the editors of *The Emerald Handbook of Work, Workplaces, and Disruptive Issues in HRM* know we are at a bend in the road, and the wise response now is to make the turn. The many types of change and disruption chronicled in this volume are the stuff of everyday life all around the world. As such, they shape the experience of working for employees everywhere. To successfully address the challenges associated with disruptive change will require the full attention and commitment of human resource scholars and students, managers and executives, labour leaders and policy makers. The chapters in this volume signal the need for meaningful change in the way work is designed as well as the objectives to be achieved by human resource management (HRM) and development practices.

This timely collection of chapters by scholars from a variety of countries and diverse perspectives brings to the fore a variety of new challenges to be addressed by organisations in the 21st century – challenges that require new approaches to thinking about, studying and managing employees. In a refreshing departure from the familiar framing of HRM, the volume editors broke away from the familiar approach of organising chapters according to functional activities (e.g. recruitment, staffing, training, compensation, etc.) and instead focus on the many significant disruptions affecting where work is done, how work is done, who is doing the work and even why people work. Rather than looking back to survey knowledge accumulated in years past, this volume asks readers to consider the future. Simply stated, the objectives of the editors are promoting ‘innovative, practical, and forward thinking’ with the hope that the ideas presented will ‘act as a catalyst to encourage discussion and debate’.

Some types of change affecting modern workplaces are evolving slowly and somewhat predictably, but other changes were unforeseen, abrupt and therefore disruptive. Among the many types of disruptions addressed in this volume are demographic changes, globalisation, climate change, digital technology, artificial intelligence and global pandemics. By delving deeply into the implications of such disruptive developments, the editors encourage readers to fundamentally rethink

how scholars and practitioners imagine the nature of work and employment in modern organisations.

Taken together, the various chapters reflect the complex, multi-level system within which human resource scholars and practitioners operate. Through close examination of how our embedding system has quickly evolved in unprecedented ways, this volume pushes readers to also consider the potential systemic effects of human resource practices. The approach broadens the range of possible consequences associated with HRM and development activities and encourages us to claim and acknowledge greater responsibility for the positive and negative consequences of such activities for employees, employers, communities and the natural environment.

As the editors rightly conclude in their closing chapter, the disruptions discussed in this volume mean one thing for certain: ‘how we do our work, our notion of what constitutes the workplace, and the role of HRM has changed forever’. The disruptions discussed in this volume mean that advances will be made by new lines of scholarship and ongoing practical experimentation in how work is organised, thereby reinvigorating HRM and development and, ideally, attracting new talent to carry the field forward.

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# **Acknowledgements**

We would like to acknowledge the foresight of Niall Kennedy in supporting this handbook and giving us the opportunity to develop this great project. We are also extremely grateful to our chapter authors for their contributions and insights.