Human Resource Management and Digital Technology

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HRM and Digital Technology in the Sport Industry

Human resource management (HRM) is traditionally defined as “all management decisions related to policies and practices that together shape the employment relationship and are aimed at achieving individual, organizational, and societal goals” (Bach & Edwards, 2013, p. 19). This definition highlights the strategic and complex elements that define, influence, and result from the management of human resources. Sport organizations are functioning in a global context that is rapidly changing and mobilizing toward efficiency. Specifically, the development of integrative technologies and social media has pushed sport managers to consider how they can leverage social media and embrace emergent trends to stay relevant (functional) (Naraine & Parent, 2017; Parent et al., 2018). This is particularly relevant in post-pandemic spaces where sport organizations must streamline processes to recover or maintain an audience. Given these vital and uncertain times, there is a greater need to dissect HRM policies and practices in relation to contextualized individual (micro), organizational (meso), and societal (macro) factors (MacLean, 2016; Parent et al., 2018; Taylor, 2016). Effectively managing personnel requires a comprehensive understanding of internal and external factors that help or hinder the creation of competitive advantage for sport organizations (Kerwin, 2015).

Sport managers view human resources as the capital where managers must spend time enhancing individual development to contribute to performance and productivity (Chelladurai & Kerwin, 2017). Development within HRM has typically been viewed from a micro and meso level where human resources (e.g., volunteers, professionals, interns, clients) and individual differences (e.g., personality, values) contribute to management practices (e.g., staffing, training, orientation, performance appraisals) that are adopted, and subsequently impact attitudinal outcomes (e.g., satisfaction, commitment, productivity) of human resources (e.g., Kerwin, 2015; MacLean, 2016). As outlined by Taylor (2016), many sport managers now focus on strategic human resource management (SHRM) that bridges traditional HRM policies and practices with a planned strategy for an organization. Within SHRM, the strategic objectives of sport organizations should be implemented into HRM decisions made by managers (Taylor, 2016). These strategic objectives, set by sport managers, must include a reflection on the agency of society where the social, political, legal, and technical world around them are considered (Kerwin, 2015).
Unfortunately, sport managers have historically been found to adopt HRM policies and practices that omit strategic foresight (e.g., Moore & Levermore, 2012; Taylor, 2016; Taylor & McGraw, 2006), thus leaving organizations vulnerable to becoming irrelevant in changing and turbulent times. Moore and Levermore (2012) emphasized that a large proportion of the sport industry can be characterized as small- and medium-sized enterprises (SME) that require unique management and strategy compared to other larger industry sectors. In particular, Taylor and McGaw’s (2006) exploration of 43 non-profit sport organizations found that only one-quarter of their sample adopted formalized human resource practices within the SME framework. Therefore, despite the emphasis on formalization in larger businesses and corporations, sport managers have room to grow regarding strategically adopting HRM practices to suit their context. Further, Taylor and McGaw highlighted that reasons for adopting more formalized human resource practices were to respond to (1) new skill requirements for employees and volunteers (i.e., technological requirements), and (2) the needs of a diverse membership or client base. It is, therefore, important for sport managers to scan their micro-, meso-, and macro-level contexts to become strategic, contemporary, and forward-thinking regarding formalized HRM.

The Emergence of e-HRM

One way for sport managers to adopt SHRM is to consider the presence and adoption of electronic human resource management (e-HRM). e-HRM is a meso-level application that provides the information required to manage micro-HR practices and processes while considering macro-level (i.e., societal) adaptations (Welbourne, 2010). Applications or resources linked to e-HRM typically include employee databases and payroll systems, but can also extend to include systems such as e-recruitment, e-learning, performance management, and reward systems. The most sophisticated systems allow each HRM practice to amalgamate into one platform. Welbourne (2010) suggests the main goals of implementing and adopting e-HRM are cost reduction, improving HR services, and improving strategic orientation, thus meeting the call for SHRM in sport (Taylor, 2016).

The push for enhanced technologies connected to the management of personnel in sport is in its infancy. Large sport enterprises like Adidas and Under Armour have embraced big data and artificial intelligence in the move toward digital technology to improve HRM practices; however, many are still far behind. The term digital transformation is now used in contemporary management practices where human resource processes are altered by the use of technology to become more effective in connecting HRM to broader employment processes (Vardarlier, 2020). Moreover, the process by which positive outcomes arise is linked to digital ecosystems where management must be strategically (and thoughtfully) implemented to complement organizational strategy (Dossena & Mochi, 2020). Given the variable context, lack of strategy, and resourcing typically associated with HRM in sport (Moore & Levermore, 2012; Taylor & McGraw, 2006), not all sport managers have moved toward adopting e-HRM in their organizations. Specifically, sport organizations typically function with relatively few human resources (therefore lacking a robust HR department) and, consequently, often do not operate in a strategic manner (Taylor, 2016; Taylor & McGraw, 2006). Moreover, Hoeber et al. (2015) outlined that community sport organizations focus on innovation and changes that are process-related, administrative, and incremental in nature, which may make a shift from traditional HRM to e-HRM feel overwhelming to sport managers. Therefore, it is important to break down the strategic elements of e-HRM in a way that addresses the efficient use of such functions in the sports domain.
This chapter outlines relevant theory regarding e-HRM and digital ecosystems, functions of e-HRM in organizations, the factors that have been shown to influence the implementation of e-HRM within digital ecosystems in organizations, and directions ahead for understanding the theoretical relevance of e-HRM in sport.

Theory and Movement Forward

The presence of an HR department and HRM strategy in an organization will significantly influence if e-HRM is adopted (Rahman et al., 2018). To unpack the strategy related to e-HRM and to explore the adoption (or lack thereof) of e-HRM in sport, the technology-organization-environment (TOE) theory is adopted here within. TOE maintains that the adoption and implementation of any innovation system are underpinned by three contextual factors: technology, organization, and environment (Tornatzky & Fleischer, 1990).

The technological context outlines the features of the technologies existing for adoption by the organization, and the existing technology within an organization that could be utilized within an innovation process (DePietro et al., 1990; Tornatzky & Fleischer, 1990). In sport, this would be a review of the current technology that is available to sport organizations in the management of human resources. For example, something as simple as strategically using an organization’s Twitter account to recruit participants from a larger pool of individuals may fall under this factor of technological context. Moreover, an informed HR manager will start to navigate the utility of software platforms such as ADP©, UKG©, and SAP ©, to name a few. By reviewing the technological context, change toward e-HRM may be less overwhelming as the use of existing resources is emphasized and efficient interfaces are presented.

Organizational context highlights the structure of the organization and the availability of processes to apply the technology. For example, in sport, the nature and frequency of communication internally and externally, types of human resources (e.g., volunteers, employees, interns), size of the organization, financial capital, and organizational capital (Taylor, 2016) frame the organizational context that would impact the adoption and maintenance of e-HRM practices (DePietro et al., 1990; Tornatzky & Fleischer, 1990). Moore and Levermore (2012) emphasize the need to critically review the size of the organization (through its human resources and financial resources) when exploring the capacity to engage in new and strategic practices. Further, Taylor’s (2016) assessment of the lack of SHRM in sport underscores the notion that the organizational context may be the most challenging in a move toward e-HRM.

Finally, environmental context clarifies the ecological conditions that are available for a sport organization to innovate and be strategic within e-HRM. As an example, the structure of the sport system, government regulations, and government funding are all environmental context factors that would influence e-HRM within TOE theory (DePietro et al., 1990). With this wholistic TOE theoretical frame in mind, a discussion of e-HRM in organizations is presented to outline the benefits and strategies linked to this process of seeing technology, the organization, and the environment as an interrelated system.

e-HRM in Organizations

The Positive Influence of e-HRM

Given the reluctance to change (Taylor, 2016), sport managers may be asking why they need to adopt e-HRM practices in a context where traditional HRM practices have worked well. The first response to such a question revolves around the need to be strategic. Within HRM, no
matter the context, human resources can be leveraged to create a competitive advantage (Kerwin, 2015). Given TOE theory, understanding the environment around an organization is essential to creating this competitive advantage. As noted by Armstrong (2006), there are many benefits of e-HRM that connect the external environment to internal goals. Specifically, the implementation of e-HRM enables the improvement of activities and processes from the HRM domain by achieving the following goals (from Armstrong, 2006):

- Improving the quality of information available to make decisions,
- Reducing the administrative burden on the HR department by keeping systems within databases,
- Improving the speed at which information is available,
- Improving the flexibility of information to support business planning,
- Improving services to employees,
- Producing HR metrics such as performance indicators,
- Aiding human capital reporting,
- Improving productivity,
- Reducing operational costs, and
- Managing people’s working time more effectively.

Regarding improvement of services to employees listed above, in sport, this is particularly relevant to nonprofit organizations or small for-profit entities that operate on limited budgets. The use of e-HRM could reduce operational costs around onboarding and provide a systemic process that ensures each new paid-staff member or volunteer board member receives the same information entering their position. The lead time to set up videos and information pieces can be put into place in the front end, while most time can then be spent to ensure new individuals feel adequately resourced and welcomed. This would improve the quality of information available and the speed at which individuals can receive information (e.g., they don’t have to wait for an appropriate time to meet with current volunteer board members or administrative staff for knowledge translation and transfer). Instead, the technological capability is available to record information and send it to staff and volunteers, and the organization has the knowledge pieces on hand (e.g., board member handbook) that can easily be shared online. The application of TOE emphasizes how e-HRM can be contextually relevant for sport managers.

Each factor in the above list emphasizes the utility of e-HRM, however, aiding in the reporting of human capital has become increasingly important. Specifically, there has been a push for sport managers to be more socially aware of the decisions they are making. As an example, the #MeToo and Black Lives Matter movements have made managers more aware of how their decisions are impacting marginalized groups (e.g., Agyemang & Singer, 2014; Hindman & Walker, 2020). In particular, the recruiting, hiring, and treatment processes of marginalized individuals have come under the microscope. For sport managers who think strategically and thoughtfully, the environment can prompt this look toward which technologies and current organizational resources can be used to increase the information available regarding those they recruit and hire, as well as aid in the effective reporting of their human capital context. These new e-processes may cause managers who are forward-thinking and strategic to pause and either enhance current HRM practices or change less inclusive practices.

The outcomes associated with e-HRM are strategic and link to the goals of an organization. Within TOE, a sport manager would look to leverage their current resources in a way to harness technology that is most effective for their organization. The change associated with these processes certainly requires thought but may not be as daunting as some may think.
What Does e-HRM Look Like?

Given the positive outcomes and link to TOE theory, sport managers may be convinced that e-HRM is the best strategy for their sport organization; however, the next step is operationalizing e-HRM into current policy and practice. As such, sport managers may be asking, what does e-HRM look like? As an example, within the sport industry, many organizations are striving to move forward with plans for gender equity and inclusion (Cooper et al., 2020; Jeanes et al., 2021). In order to recruit more females and underrepresented individuals into positions, it is important to have a thoughtful and comprehensive recruitment plan; e-HRM can help with process planning regarding linking recruitment to overall organizational strategy. Online tools such as ADP©, UKG©, and InitLive© can help support classic recruitment strategies and supplement the use of online recruitment through websites and social networks. Implementing search tool parameters around target groups that may help facilitate a wider network of candidates (e.g., Canadian Women & Sport, Indigenous social networks), and software platforms such as UKG© allow managers to track language used within recruiting and selection practices.

The complexity of these processes relates to a new sport world where employees, customers, and suppliers are working side-by-side (virtually) in a digital ecosystem. Within this new space, concepts such as radio frequency identification (RFID), cloud computing, artificial intelligence, decision-making/supporting systems, and big data mining are used to outline the interconnectivity of e-HRM processes (Wang et al., 2017). These advanced ecosystems connect stakeholders and allow for shared value, but they must be managed effectively to ensure that practices match organizational objectives.

The following section details the elements of HRM that have been linked to e-HRM processes. Specifically, the section starts with Table 2.1 which provides a description of common HRM practices, the function of e-HRM, and a description of what the practice would look like in sport. It is important to recognize that each of these practices should be considered within the larger digital ecosystem as a way of connecting the technology to the organization and the environment (TOE theory).

As described by Rahman et al. (2018), there are many factors that influence the implementation of e-HRM. Therefore, the functions of e-HRM listed in Table 2.1 must be thoughtfully considered before adopted within a sport organization. As an example, e-Recruitment is defined as using online technology to recruit, assess, interview, and hire personnel (Dhamija, 2012). From the TOE perspective, the organization must have the human capacity to understand the various online (e.g., Indeed, Monster) and social media channels (e.g., LinkedIn, Twitter) that may appropriately target individuals from wider pools of applicants. Second, the software (i.e., technology) used to store and organize the information garnered from an online search must be accessible to sport managers. When looking through the various options (e.g., ADP©, SAP©, UKG©), a sport manager must understand which capabilities matter most to the organization (e.g., interface between departments, data input points, tracking, monitoring, etc.). And, finally, the environment around the sport organization must be attuned to the platforms that the sport manager(s) are using to recruit individuals. For instance, if a sport organization is recruiting employees from rural or Indigenous communities, the type of social networking site used to target members of the community must be thoughtfully chosen as relevant to those communities. The factors of the technology available, the organizational capacity, and the environment for which the e-HRM process is serving must always be considered.

Further, within e-Recruitment is e-Selection, which outlines that online selection systems are important because the system can link job description requirements to an individual’s personal qualifications (Parry, 2011). This allows a sport manager to assess an incumbent’s
Table 2.1 Functions of e-HRM in Sport Practice

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<th>HRM</th>
<th>e-HRM</th>
<th>Sport Example</th>
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| Administrative support   | • Basic record of employees including presence, absence, earnings, etc.  
|                          | • Database management, attendance systems, workday, etc.               | When managing a large-scale sport event with thousands of volunteers, e-HRM allows sport managers to adopt an online system to schedule, track, and record volunteer hours and absences. This makes it efficient when schedule changes inevitably occur. |
| HR planning              | • Statistical analysis of fluctuations in labor force                | A professional sport organization may use a program like SAS to track performance of coaches when looking to hire the most effective coach for their team. |
|                          | • Trend analysis software and simulation models.                      |                                                                                                                                              |
| Job analysis             | • Management of business job descriptions and analysis of organizational structure  
|                          | • Documentation of results of job analysis, and visualization of existing and planned organizational structures | Nonprofit sport organizations may use job analysis software to collect data that identifies all tasks performed by individuals as well as desired performance. This information is then stored and matched against the organizational mission and values, policies, and systems to then be flagged for update as needed. |
| Recruitment              | • Process planning, documentation of recruitment implementation        | All sport managers looking to diversify their workplace can use e-recruitment software to manage larger databases of potential employees. This data can be matched to pair candidates with mission and values, as well as assess fit with specific organizational parameters. |
|                          | • Creating, registering, and managing data from advertisements, application forms, support for classical and online recruitment, use of social networks |                                                                                                                                              |
### Table 2.1 (Continued)

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<th>HRM</th>
<th>e-HRM</th>
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| Training and development  | • Research in the educational and developmental needs of employees, planning of training programs, organization of training, and storage of teaching materials  
                           | • Online questionnaires, analysis of development trends, data management, implementation of e-learning programs  
                           | Post COVID-19 pandemic, the training, and development of employees around the health and safety of members and consumers will be at the forefront of activities. E-training and development will allow these programs to be planned in line with organizational goals, and information to be stored to enhance organizational memory. |
| Individual performance    | • Performance Management  
                           | • Documentation, analysis, feedback, trend analysis  
                           | As metrics and analytics become a key pillar of grant funding, for profit and nonprofit sport organizations must find efficient ways to monitor performance of key stakeholders. E-performance management provides databases for sport managers to document performance, analyze trends, provide feedback to individuals, and then summarize trend analyses that will be useful for grant funding reports. |
| management                |                                                                        |                                                                                                                                            |
| Compensation              | • Creation of salary structure, salary modeling, level of compensation analysis  
                           | • Analysis, calculation based on internal and external information.  
                           | National sport organizations are nonprofit entities that work with limited budgets. Their mandates require paid staff, but they must be strategic in terms of budget for salaries. A compensation software would allow for salary modeling and long-term planning with regard to tenured positions versus contracts. |

*Source: From Gupta & Saxena (2013) and Berber et al. (2018).*
ability to meet role requirements, elements which can be assessed through tests such as online, audio and video conferencing (Parry, 2011; Sanjeev & Makkar, 2014). Further, a software program link SAP© allows managers to track and review inclusive language within materials used for hiring and selection. The process of e-Recruitment and e-Selection becomes strategically relevant as an individual who enters an organization through these systems can then be tracked to determine performance metrics – as they relate to job descriptions – as well as contribute to the trend analysis of the company’s strategic plan. e-Compensation plans can then be embedded into the performance management system that links each of these processes in a thoughtful and analytic manner. Further, for sport organizations that are at the SME level and do not have a formal human resource manager, e-Compensation management provides a system to administer and track employee participation in benefits programs and reimbursement plans (Hendrickson, 2003). By adopting e-Compensation structures, managers within SMEs can track performance metrics and compare standards more efficiently for an individual and across individuals in an enterprise. Having performance statistics and comparable indices at a manager’s fingertips enhances efficiency and ensures accuracy when determining the compensation that is allocated to individuals. Data-based, accurate decisions are directly linked to perceptions of fairness for employees and increased perceptions of fairness reduce negative forms of conflict (Kerwin et al., 2015). Therefore, sport managers can track participation in vital employee services such as health, dental, and life insurance, compensation, profit sharing, and retirement (if applicable) that can be monitored by managers or the volunteer board of directors (Hendrickson, 2003). This monitoring can lead to more efficient and effective decisions and workflow, which influence individual attitudes and behaviors. The ability to adopt these strategies is based on how sport managers strategically view their context and capacity.

Sport Industry Trends

As indicated by Naraine and Parent (2017), organizational sustainability and strategic planning must be linked to advances in technology. Sport organizations must stay connected to industry trends to maintain a competitive advantage and strategically align with progressive visions. Further, the global COVID-19 pandemic has emphasized the need to maintain technologically relevant platforms, where the in-person connection is not available or safe. Given the need to embrace technology to stay relevant and viable, there are many ways sport managers can use TOE theory to consider (1) the technology available, (2) their organization and its capacity for e-HRM, and (3) the environmental factors around them to influence the strategy, goal setting, and focus of e-HRM. The next section outlines four contexts that represent the benefit of e-HRM within the TOE framework in sport.

Recruitment of Diverse Populations – The Context

It is widely recognized that sport organizations possess a relatively homogenous group of human resources (Chelladurai & Kerwin, 2017; Fink, 2008; Melton & Bryant, 2017). While organizations like the NBA and NASCAR have recently taken steps to improve inclusive policy, there are still large gaps to be filled in executive, leadership, coaching, and official positions within the industry. This lack of diversity suggests that the recruitment of employees, volunteers, and interns would benefit from a more strategic and thoughtful approach. Within each sport organization, there are resources that could be placed toward the recruitment of a wider population of individuals. From a human resource management perspective, something as simple as the wording of job postings can be inherently limiting and therefore could ultimately cut off perspective candidates before they even apply (Whisenant et al., 2005). Therefore, it
becomes increasingly relevant to monitor the nature of job recruitment within an organization to ensure that each piece of the recruitment puzzle is inclusive. The very nature of e-Recruitment enhances inclusivity by casting a wider net. As we move toward a policy that requires sport organizations to enhance diversity, it is important to consider the technology that would be available to reach more individuals from diverse populations.

The e-HRM Case: Strategically Targeting Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

The issue (environment and organization): The government of Canada, and Sport Canada specifically, has made a call to sport organizations to be more diverse in terms of those who comprise their staff and volunteer boards of directors. Many executive directors and CEOs of nonprofit sport organizations have critically reviewed their employee and volunteer databases to find that their current HRM policy and practice for recruiting are done without the use of technology. Further, the postings typically involve word of mouth solicitation and dated modes of posting jobs on job boards. These leaders need to recognize that the traditional methods of recruitment may be limiting the number of individuals the job postings are reaching and may be missing large groups of individuals.

The solution (technology): Boards of directors should consider the use of software platforms (e.g., ADP®, SAP®, UKG®, Workday©) that help automate time-consuming tasks and provide tailored guidance that connects protocols from recruitment to selection, hiring and onboarding. This includes the strategic implementation of policy that specifies diversity management protocol through these software systems. As an example, ADP® provides the opportunity to connect to stakeholders within their digital ecosystem to link recruitment to strategic goals and priorities outlined by members, the board of directors, and others. This way leaders can have metrics and information about recruits at their fingertips when making decisions about recruitment and selection.

The result: Sport organizations can increase their recruitment pools of candidates using unique demographic touchpoints that reflect broader strategic goals.

Training and Scheduling Volunteers and Staff – The Context

The impact of the COVID–19 pandemic has shown sport managers they must be nimble in how they deliver HRM practices. In particular, when training and scheduling volunteers and part-time staff, it is important to recognize what organizational aspects are most crucial to the process (policy, resources, individuals) and which technologies will best suit the outcome that is desired (i.e., effective training of volunteers to engage in program development; scheduling volunteers and part-time staff to set up and deliver an event). With a crisis in the ability to interact face-to-face, it becomes increasingly important that sport managers understand the organization and available technologies (Doherty et al., 2020). As noted by Doherty et al. (2020), nonprofit sport organizations that rely on volunteers and part-time staff must embrace new technology in order to manage HRM processes through shutdowns. This is especially important in a post-pandemic landscape where nonprofit sport managers are struggling to stay relevant and connect with stakeholders. With technology in place, a sport organization can create systems that link training and scheduling to HR development. This link allows for system
The e-HR case: Sport organizations must manage personnel in virtual spaces

The issue (environment and organization): Following the global pandemic associated with COVID-19, there has been a reduction of the number of individuals who can safely engage in onsite live events. Therefore, sport organizations that host large events or manage large groups of part time staff must be flexible in how they train and manage individuals to be involved in the operations (course/arena/stadium set up and take down) of events and championships. Therefore, online training and scheduling becomes an essential element in effective management of volunteers.

The solution (technology): Leaders within the sport space can use a combination of InitLive© and ADP© or consider SAP© to first onboard and train volunteers or part time staff through InitLive©, and then strategically manage scheduling (e.g., ADP©, SAP©). The use of online software platforms such as InitLive© allows managers to attach performance metrics to job descriptions and track when and how well personnel perform within the training protocol. Videos and training manuals can be added to the system and shared on various platforms to ensure accessibility to all individuals. Big data analytics can also be used to track and model the use of time to ensure that efficient scheduling is linked to championship operations. Furthermore, software such as ADP© and SAP© tracks part time staff and volunteer time and attendance. Online hours tracking is particularly helpful when volunteers or part time staff need to post shift change requests and request movements from shift to shift.

The result: Part time staff and volunteers are trained and prepared for their roles without face-to-face content, therefore reducing any health risks that may come with large groups for orientation and/or training protocol. In addition, managers can track and maintain hours and scheduling data that can be used to create efficiency within HRM models within future event planning.

Living in an Evidence-Based Sport Industry – The Context

Sport organizations are functioning in a world that is performance-based and reliant on the ability of sport managers to track and report a variety of performance indices. From a business analytics standpoint, the ability to forecast and strategically manage human resources is a skill that will separate thriving organizations from those who simply fall behind (Wang & Cotton, 2018). It is important for sport managers to consider how they are tracking the performance of their human resources both on and off the field. On the field of play, there are scouts and statisticians who track any and all data points of play (cf. Fried & Mumcu, 2016); however, new information is being used to track the performance of our sport employees in the boardroom (e.g., Trolio et al., 2016). Therefore, in order to gain a competitive advantage, tracking performance has become an essential element to SHRM and e-HRM practices.
The e-HRM case: Evidence-based compensation and performance management

The issue (environment and organization): Sport leaders and managers are expecting performance management systems that allow for the communication of goals from the strategic plan to individual, frontline employees. Leaders recognize that the alignment of organizational and individual goals is essential in ensuring employees understand their roles within an organization and are engaged in shared responsibility toward meeting these goals to deliver superior service to their fans. Progressive leaders must understand that performance management will start with selection and training of high-quality employees and needs to be a part of an overall e-HRM system. As an example, within UKG software©, corporate, department and individual goals are explicitly tied to metrics that can be tracked through online portals. In real time, employees can input their indicators and managers can track performance standards on a variety of criteria. Moreover, SAP© and other software platforms allow managers to engage in 360-degree feedback where cross communication can occur with various departments and reports can be generated that link specific outcome indicators. These metrics are posted in historical data where performance appraisal meetings are directly linked to accurate, up to date, and comprehensive data points (e.g., UKG©, SAP©).

The solution (technology): Efficiency and customer service are organizational goals that represent the values of most sport organizations. The use of performance management systems associated with software like ADP©, UKG©, SAP©, and otherwise, interface to incorporate organizational goals into performance appraisals (PA) processes for employees. Implementing these goals into the PA e-HRM system ensures evaluations that measure employees consistently on items related to organizational strategy. Relatedly, by using e-performance management systems, strategic goals are communicated across the organization, employees understand business objectives, and everyone is committed to their own specific and measurable goals associated with larger organizational objectives.

The result: Upper management and employees see the performance measures and the link to organizational strategy when they log into the e-HRM system. Performance metrics can be tracked daily and are linked to training requirements and compensation packages.

Working on the Road: Reimbursement Systems – The Context

Sport employees often find themselves on the road or working from home offices (Chelladurai & Kerwin, 2017). When working with events or sport programs, sport managers may have to travel to be onsite or work from physical spaces that do not always have the equipment or supplies of the main office space (e.g., working from the operations trailer at the US Open tennis championship). Within this job design, employees may encounter business expenses that by policy must be reimbursed. As such, the compensation and reimbursement system of sport organizations becomes extremely important to ensuring that employees are not “out of pocket” for business-related expenses (e.g., printer paper, internet connection, office supplies). Traditional systems that rely on tracking expenses through pencil and paper reporting take time and are less efficient in the management of employee compensation. Thus, it is important for sport managers to scan their environment to uncover technology that may help their reimbursement and compensation system.
The e-HRM case: Efficient and effective reimbursement systems

The issue (environment and organization): Employees in sport and event management are constantly on the road or working from home office spaces. These work from home spaces are increasingly more common in our post-pandemic context. The need to be agile and available requires that workspaces are fluent and the ability to travel is always a priority. In this context, online expense tracking systems need to be adopted that provide a virtual place for employees to upload and record their expense transactions in real time. The expenses need to be simultaneously cross-listed and verified by their accounting department back at the head office, no matter where globally they reside.

The solution (technology): Leaders can use e-HRM software like MetaViewer© that offers expense tracking systems that can be linked to employee-based credit cards. Further, from a SHRM perspective, the employee compensation system could also be linked to a performance appraisal and monitoring system that are tied to organizational goals.

The result: Sport organizations can link workflow within one department (finance) to other departments (e.g., operations) that require efficiency in their budgeting and reimbursement policy. Specifically, adopting a program like MetaViewer© allows for seamless movement on the payment of reimbursement to employees and the documentation of expenses within organizational balance sheets.

e-HRM in Sport: The Move Forward

As e-HRM practices are adopted within sport organizations, it is important to be mindful of evaluating their effectiveness within HRM systems. For example, sport managers must start to see the role of e-HRM from micro-, meso-, and macro-level perspectives. This intuitively creates a broader understanding of the digital ecosystem that should be managed. First, from a micro perspective, the influence of e-HRM on the performance, motivation, satisfaction, and commitment of employees, volunteers, and interns should be a topic of interest moving forward. In the example cases above, volunteers are now tasked with running through e-training modules. From an empirical perspective, it is important to ask if e-training is relevant to the individual volunteer. Was the platform accessible? Did the training meet the needs of the managers who monitored the volunteers? Further, it is important to explore if the components of a digital platform are contributing to a larger and more effective digital ecosystem. The benefit of TOE theory is that it provides a framework to determine the effectiveness of an ecosystem through the principles of technology-organization-environment.

Evaluating the effectiveness of e-HRM will be an essential element of understanding the theoretical relevance of these processes in our sport organizations. These are valuable questions that should target an assessment of the role of e-HRM within sport and contexts where human resource management may include unique strategic outcomes (e.g., for profit versus nonprofit, recreational sport versus elite sport, rural versus urban committees) and unique populations of human resources (e.g., more volunteers than paid staff, homogenous groups versus heterogeneous groups).

From the meso-level, for organizations in small, medium, and large enterprises, it is important to dissect which technologies are best suited for varying levels of human and financial capacity. It is also relevant to ask; which technologies require more “know-how”? Does financial cost of an e-HRM platform impact the effectiveness of its implementation? Alternatively, we may ask how the e-HRM system(s) that are adopted coordinate with an organization’s mission, vision, and values? In the context examples above, sport organizations must adopt new recruiting systems to
ensure they are reaching out to a more diverse pool of applicants. Does this e-HRM strategy align with the organization’s strategic plan? How are policy statements connected with the e-Recruitment strategy? There are claims that e-HRM allows managers more time to think of strategy and strategic functioning. It is, therefore, relevant to explore if strategic outcomes are realized in contexts where e-HRM is put into practice.

From the macro-level, within the TOE framework, the environment around an organization will influence if and how technology is adopted. Therefore, as we move forward, we must ask, what environmental factors impact technology and the organization when adopting e-HRM systems? How do external pressures to be nimble dictate the e-HRM practices that are put into place? Are there political influences on how and when e-HRM practices are adopted? What are the legal and privacy issues attached to creating online databases and tracking systems? How has the COVID-19 pandemic influenced the presence of e-HRM in sport? When considering the external environment related to e-HRM, the social, political, economic, and legal landscape must contribute to an understanding of the agency of society that is an imperative within SHRM practice (Chelladurai & Kerwin, 2017). The digital ecosystem relies on the interface of e-HRM practices to be effective in serving larger organizational goals.

**Conclusion**

As sport managers navigate a complex and evolving sport industry, e-HRM technologies that are adopted must be meaningful within the environment and to the organization. Therefore, we must explore the organizational and technology aspects of e-HRM that are relevant for SME and large sport enterprises. In particular, we understand that organizational capacity is an issue within SMEs within sport and that human resources are a vital component of the organizational capacity process (e.g., Doherty et al., 2014; Doherty & Cuskelly, 2019; Millar & Doherty, 2016). However, researchers must engage in the sport context to determine how e-HRM and digital technology can contribute to the development of capacity in our SMEs. The use of digital technology in our larger sport enterprises (e.g., San Jose Sharks, San Antonio Spurs, the Canadian Football League) points to contexts where the use of e-HRM platforms and tools has enabled more efficient HRM practices. Applying the theoretical lens of TOE, researchers can investigate the digital technology used in large enterprises, to then explore the organization and environment characteristics of SMEs to determine which technologies would be most influential when considering the capacity in these enterprises. It is clear there are numerous software platforms that can assist sport managers in making their HRM processes more efficient and contribute to effective workflow. When exploring the adoption of a specific platform, organizational goals and needs must be assessed. It is important that the micro-level processes are connected to meso- (organizational) level needs. For example, which functions need to be accounted for in the platform? As an example, if a sport manager works with a large group of part-time staff who require flexibility in scheduling, UKG© or SAP© may be the most effective platforms to engage in because of their functionality related to swapping shifts, requesting shifts, and creating wait lists for shifts within the part-time workers’ schedules.

From a research perspective, we must answer the call to engage in a critical review of human resource management practice. Wicker (2017) outlined the need to explore multi-level factors that influence volunteer management in sport. Future research application of TOE, as outlined in this chapter, provides a transformational perspective of the management of volunteers in sport in that technology could be used to track, capture, and manage the recruitment, training, and retention of this vital pool of human resources. For SMEs who must manage large groups of volunteers to run effective programs and events, the adoption of digital technology must be explored and evaluated to
ensure strategic priorities around training. Specifically, Cuskelly et al. (2020) outlined that traditional modes of training in the event context prioritized a short-term goal of filling volunteer positions rather than addressing long-term strategic goals. Therefore, the exploration of digital technology in these contexts can provide a valuable framework to address the call for more strategic HRM processes (Taylor, 2016). Future research must respect the varying capacity issues that occur within sport enterprises and apply a TOE framework to determine the most effective digital technologies, in context.

It is also important to examine training that occurs when online software platforms are adopted. This is vital in sport organizations where human resource capacity for such innovations is low. Therefore, intersecting research that relates e-HRM with capacity becomes increasingly relevant. And finally, contemporary sport management research must explore the role of e-HRM in creating processes that contribute to our strategic human resource management functioning. E-HRM must be deemed essential (not optional) as we move through and into a post-pandemic sport system.

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References

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