

Northwestern University  
Executive Management for Design and Construction

**Human Resource Management**  
**PROJ\_MGT 467**

**Course Objective:**

To be a successful executive in the AEC industry, it's critical that you are able to manage the human capital in your firm as effectively as possible. Whether you are in an architecture, engineering, or contracting firm, what you are really selling to your customers is the capabilities of your people. Your employees are the only real competitive advantage that you can have, and they are also the single biggest investment your firm makes. So how you attract, retain, develop, and motivate your employees is as critical as anything to your overall success. And as an executive, it will be your responsibility to do that well.

There are three main goals for this course:

- To make the case that an organization's ability to manage its human capital is the single biggest source of competitive advantage that it can achieve.
- To describe best practices in organizational development and human resources that you can leverage over the course of your careers.
- To impart specific skills that you will need as operations executives to successfully implement your organization's human capital strategies.

**Week-by-week description of the course:**

**Week 1**

**Why Human Resources and Organizational Development Matter**

In this session, we will make the argument why HR and OD issues are important for an enterprise leader to understand and be able to implement. This will be done by analyzing the size of a firm's investment in its' human capital in dollar terms, and by exploring how value typically gets created in companies in the AEC industry. This will be accompanied by a case study which will demonstrate how much effort and resources top firms devote to the development of human capital.

**Week 2 & 3**    **Staffing and Hiring**

These sessions are devoted to how an organization brings people into the firm. We will look at how an organization makes staffing forecasts in order to plan for hiring/reductions and tools used in recruiting candidates. We will discuss how we craft position descriptions in order to understand what skills and traits we should be looking for in potential employees, and how we plan for and conduct interviews in order to determine whether candidates fit that criteria. We will explore the legal issues involved in the hiring process, including what can and cannot be used as hiring criteria. We will also consider the use of personality trait survey tools.

**Week 4****Compensation**

The compensation module includes a look at what the real cost to employ an individual really is. We will discuss the implications of the Fair Labor Standards act on compensation practices, and we will explore the compensation philosophy spectrum, from entitlement to pay-for-performance. We will discuss the purpose and uses of base pay versus variable pay, and will discuss a case study in which participants will make recommendations for how base pay is to be adjusted in a fictional organization based on typical competing priorities – employee performance, budget constraints, compensation goals, etc.

**Week 5 & 6****Performance Management**

Performance Management is an ongoing process by which an organization tries to maximize how employee's activities and outputs contribute to the organization's overall goals. This idea is closely related to other key organizational development concepts – leadership development, compensation, retention, etc. We will explore a model for performance management that is more comprehensive than merely delivering feedback to employee and discuss specific tools and strategies that are effective in implementing each phase of the model. We will review specific evaluation tools and rating methods, and how each of these tools is designed for specific purposes – the evaluation tool must be chosen based on the intended goal of the evaluation process. We will review goals and goal setting as a tool to maximize performance and will explore coaching and mentoring as logical extensions of the evaluation/development process.

**Week 7****Training and Development**

This module is about how we get better at getting better. We will discuss metrics for training programs including how much training is to be provided, and how to balance time and resources between different types of training (compliance, job/technical, development training, etc.). We'll discuss methods for determining what training is required at a given point in time, the challenges of training in small organizations, and consider a very specific training topic – employee onboarding. Finally, we'll consider adult learning patterns and how that affects development on-the-job. Informal learning strategies (mentoring, coaching, peer groups, etc.) are often more effective than formal classroom learning. This leads to the concept of the learning organization and how that can be supported.

**Week 8****Talent Management, Employee Engagement, and Teambuilding**

This module explores three separate but related topics. Talent Management considers how we ensure that we have the right employees with the right skillsets at all levels of the organization, and how we plan for changes in the organization in the future. Employee engagement considers how invested our employees are in their work, and what factors create engagement if handled well, or disengagement if handled poorly. We will use the Five Dysfunctions of a Team model to discuss what creates cohesive teams, and correlate that to our own experiences.

**Week 9****Employment Law**

This module reviews all major legislation that forms the guidelines for employers in the areas of hiring, compensation, work practices, accommodation, discrimination, and affirmative action.

**Week 10****Final Presentations**

Final presentations by students intended to identify and develop a solution, based on concepts discussed in the course, for an actual human resource or organizational development challenge that currently exists in participants' organizations.

**Grade Determination:**

Final Project ..... 40%

Weekly Assignments.. 20%

Class Participation ..... 40%

**NOTE:** *This course description explains the essence of the material covered. Canvas is the best source for the most up-to-date information about specific details for any given offering of the course.*

**Texts:**

*How to Be Good at Performance*

*Appraisals* by Dick Grote, Harvard Business Review Press, 2011

*The Five Dysfunctions of a Team: A*

*Leadership Fable* by Patrick Lencioni, Jossey-Bass, 2002

All other readings will be provided through Canvas.