

PRACTICES OF HANDING OVER NOTE AS AN EFFORT IN MAINTAINING CONTINUITY

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Abstract:

Handover note is a document created by a person who is about to leave the position or organization, either temporarily or permanently, which serves as a guidance to facilitate the next successor to carry out his/her duties more effectively and efficiently in maintaining continuity. It is a very important communication tool to ensure the business runs smoothly without or with minimal issues occurring as a result of the work transition and replacement or change of employees. In public sector, handing over note is a requirement for any leaving staff but not at most of government-linked company or private sector. The aim of this study is to gain a better understanding of the concept, status and the importance of handing over notes, particularly at the corporate level. This qualitative study captured the perceptions of five managerial employees of UDA Holdings Berhad who experienced and involved in the handing over note. Data was collected through series of in-depth interviews, review of documents, and observations of the current practice. The findings showed that the concept of handing over note is not something new at UDA. It has been seen as a document of status report and expectation, a description of job function and responsibilities, a parting ritual and a transmission of authority. However, the practice of it at UDA is far from satisfactory. It is in dire need of a systematic process, varied in practice and has no legal authority and implication. Few initiatives suggested having a systematic process, a standard handover note, and policy development, review or alignment to make it legally binding and become organizational culture. Handing over note is important at both individual and organization level as a hallmark of accountability, a parameter for evaluation to measure the staff's achievements and performance, an anchor for organization stability, rail track leading to organization goals, transmission and maintenance of organizational culture and treasure chest for organization history and memory.

Keywords: Handing Over Note, Handover, Maintaining Continuity, Business Continuity

Introduction

Today's organizations are faced with a multitude of complex challenges (Fancher, 2007). Organization structures of the past are becoming less and less capable of responding to the complex challenges facing society (Carnegie Forum on Education and Economy, 1986). In the flurry of activities to be responsive to increasingly complex demands, constant effort is needed to maintain some measures or organizational efficacy (Azahari Ismail, 1994). In fact, this is the strong reason to believe that the aspect of continuity, stability and longevity is going to be far more critical facing the organization in the future. Constant effort is needed to maintain some measures of organizational efficacy. One of the approaches is by having business continuity plan (BCP). In reviewing an organization's business continuity management efforts, even though it is of dire importance to the organization, the continuity plan is in poor shape in many organizations. Therefore, to mitigate the business interruption risk and one of the imperative areas concerned is communication of information. Information needs to be communicated well and synchronize across the organization internally and externally. Anderson *et al.* (2010) "discern two important categories of communication failures: 'content omissions' in which critical information is not communicated, and 'failure-prone communication processes', including lack of face-to-face communication and illegible handwritten notes that often omit information because of an unwillingness to rewrite information daily. In addition, commission of information, with inclusion of irrelevant information, was also cited as a cause of poor handoffs" (Cor, 2010, p.750). On the other hand, loss of information can cause problematic issue in certain situation and condition to organization. Alem *et al.* (2008) reported that information failure in healthcare in Australia in 2004 has been estimated to be responsible for 30% of the A\$40 billion cost of adverse events. If a key person of a company unexpectedly resigned or temporarily away for a long duration due to illness, maternity leave and etc., a replacement employee may not be readily available in time. The leaving staff needs to handover his/her job and responsibilities to other person, perhaps his/her supervisor, informing on the current job status and progress, what needs to be done and also returning all the company documents and assets under him/her. A proper handover practice is important to ensure that the business run as usual and no or minimal issues occur as the effect of the work transition and

replacement or change of employee. Consequently, poor handover practice from one person to the next person in charge is one of signs of business continuity plan problems. Bomba and Prakash (2005) pointed that it is important to maintain continuity between work shifts in all continuous process operations. In this situation, handover note seems to be a significant tool to ensure the continuous process in business operation.

Background of the Problem

Situation seems to be critical in UDA when 45% out of one thousand one hundred seventeen employees will be due for retirement within two to five years. Within the last three years, from 2010 to 2012, on average, about 6% of the employees left UDA per year. The frequency of staff changes due to internal transfer within the organization, resignation, retirement and promotion is quite alarming and significant. In view of the current prevailing situation, serious effort should be taken place to ensure the knowledge is transferred and the business continuity is preserved. Beach *et al.* (2003) stressed that “communication breakdown has been identified as a critical component of treatment delays and poor outcomes and is characterized by insufficient or inaccurate data, mistimed or delayed information, poorly organized data, the insertion of ‘pseudo-information’, and cognitive overload” (p.365).

In addition, handover note is not only a tool to ensure the business continuity runs smoothly but also to assure the operation risks and gaps are at a minimum level. The successor needs to know the work progress and status to ensure no or minimal issues occur as the effect of the work transition and replacement or change of employee. On the other hand, the absence of it could caused a delay in getting information, time consuming in gathering all data, and most importantly the idea to get the ‘helicopter view’ of the job task and responsibility. In hospital, improper implementation of handover notes practice could affect patient condition due to wrong medicine given, delay in investigations and treatment for patient, overdose or under dose medicine given, wrong prescriptions or analysis of the symptoms, brief or inaccurate information and worst case can cause patient death. In health-care industry, a survey of doctors’ practice and perceptions reported that up to 15% of critical incidents happened from poor handover. According to Farhan *et al.* (2012), poor handover led to adverse events; these included delay in investigations and treatment for patients who were handed over with brief or inaccurate information.

Context of the Study

Urban Development Authority (UDA) Holdings Berhad is one of Malaysia’s prestigious property developer incorporated in July 14, 1999 as a public limited company. UDA was originally established by the government of Malaysia on November 12, 1971, changed with the responsibility to promote planned urban development. After 29 years of successfully fulfilling its responsibilities, UDA was incorporated on September 1, 1996 and became UDA Holdings Sdn. Bhd. The core business of the company is in property development, property management and the leisure industry. UDA has been in the business for 41 years. The major problem facing UDA today is decreased level of productivity as well as performance compared to the last 25 years, where UDA was having a constant growth and being the prominent property organization in Malaysia. There is a need for UDA to change, or else UDA will become obsolete or marginalized. This new concern has ignited several initiatives for organizational transformation at UDA. Recently, in early November 2012, UDA has introduced Voluntary Separation Scheme (VSS) to all employees with certain conditions. After the VSS implementation, there was a restructuring of the organization to accommodate the centralization purposes. Many other changes have also happened such as transferring staff from the subsidiaries to the headquarters and vice versa. Staff promotion was enhanced and new staffs had been recruited from various background i.e. fresh graduates, staff from other companies and also from other government-linked companies.

Problem Statement

UDA survived for 41 years in the country and had gone through many phase of transformation from one generation to another. People in the organization keep on changing as they retired, resigned or VSS. Though, daily work and business needs to run as usual as if the successor

had been involved in all the previous activities. The leaving staff needs to communicate and transfer the information and knowledge to the successor by having the handover note before he/she left the position or organization to ensure the continuous process in business operation. However, many successors found it is very hard to retrieve the information as there is no handover note received. Handing over note has not seriously been practiced at UDA. Some staffs prepared it but some did not. The culture is not encouraging enough in practicing the handing over note. Why? Effort in maintaining continuity seems to be unsatisfactory. What could be the consequences or risks of not having a handover note from the leaving staff? Uncertainty and chaos can be anticipated without a proper handing over note is given either verbally or in written. This situation does not only happen in corporate world but it is more critical in medical or health-care organizations as it involves directly with human lives.

Handover note is not a strange word for many people and it has been widely used all over the world in various fields. However, after a depth search through literatures related to handover note, particularly for corporate sector, I found that this subject has not been discussed and documented in details except for health care and medical industry. Most of the information and articles available are limited to forms or templates of handover notes with little or no theoretical underpinning. When it comes to the concept, approach, practice, procedures, method and purpose, it seems very vague. It is obvious that there is dearth of information and knowledge with regards to the phenomena of handing over notes. The lack of discussion on handover note in the literature indicates a potential lack of understanding as to how handover note as communication tool can affect the business continuity. The issues and questions raised above suggest that thorough research need to be done to gain better understanding of the practice of handing over notes, specifically at the corporate level.

Objective

The purpose of this study is to secure a better understanding of the nature, concept, approach, practice, procedures, method and purpose of handing over notes and its importance to the organization. The impact of handing over notes in organizations will also be examined.

Specifically, the study endeavours to achieve the following objectives:

- i. To explain the respondents' understanding on handing over notes.
- ii. To explain the respondents' perceptions toward the status of handing over notes in their organization.
- iii. To explain the respondents' perceptions of the importance of handing over notes.

Literature review

Definition

Handover subject has been extensively discussed in nursing and health care management as early as 1969. Clair and Trussell (1969) defined handover as the oral communication of pertinent information about patients. Farhan *et al.* (2012) states that handover can involve the transfer of information relating to a single patient (such as when a doctor or nurse reaches the end of their shift), or it can involve the transfer of responsibility of a whole department, ie, the transfer of overall responsibility of a department with all its patients and staff as well as other issues to the oncoming doctors. The definition of handover has since been a subject of discussions, but its basic feature as a system for communicating the information needed to facilitate the patient care process has remained (Mullen, 1988; Reiley & Stengrevics, 1989). Sherlock (1995) and Thurgood (1995) have also adopted the view that patient care continuity is central to any definition of handover and that it is its primary function.

Process of Handing Over Note

McKenna and Walsh (1997) cautioned on the need for better models to address the handover process. It was also reported in Roughton and Servers (1996) study of junior doctor handover practices that current handover processes did not meet doctor's expectations. A written handover not only reduce report time, but it could also be a valuable catch-up tool for part-time and

agency staff (Reiley & Stengrevics, 1989). However, the work of the Institute of Medicine has pointed out the inefficiencies in paper-based systems, such as loss of records and information, duplication of data, and incorrect data and storage, and highlights the need for more efficient information systems (Dick *et al.*, 1997).

Functions and Purpose of Handing Over Note

Terminology Team of the Terminology and Reference Section, Documentation Division, Department of General Assembly and Conference Management (DGACM), New York stated that “the tools are designed to ensure that staff members share valuable institutional information, with the aim of enabling other colleagues to do their jobs more effectively and efficiently” (<http://unterm.un.org/>). Zachary (n.d.) stated that “accountability enhances performance and produces long-lasting results. It requires shared intention, responsibility and ownership, a commitment to action and consistency of practice” (<http://humanresources.about.com>). For instance, in Ghana, Mr. Woeli K. Kemevor, Head of Civil Service, has urged Directors of Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) to engage the services of the Management Service Division of the Office of the Head of Civil Service (OHCS) to design organizational manuals for them and to expedite action on the presentation of their respective handing over notes that would facilitate a smooth transition of power to the new political leadership (*The Chronical*, 2012, December 13).

In health-care industry, the goal of handover is the accurate and reliable communication of task-specific patient information across shift changes, in that way ensuring a reasonable safe and effective continuous work environment (Kerr, 2002). According to Farhan *et al.* (2012), the purpose of shift hand-over was minimizing errors and ensuring safety, and knowledge of problems that may affect the next shift including outstanding actions to ensure the transition of responsibility is a safe process. It is complex but vital for the smooth, efficient and safe transition between shifts in the emergency department (ED). In addition, it has been used for apprenticeship learning and it can act as a self-feedback, teaching tool for undergraduates and postgraduates during the ward round (Herring *et al.*, 2011). In fact, it was used as an opportunity for education and a chance to establish working patterns during special circumstances such as local sporting events (Farhan *et al.*, 2012). They also stated that numerous studies have shown that handover is a vulnerable time for patient safety, providing further reasons for health-care professionals to invest in training for handover. Ekman and Segesten (1995) refer to the hidden functions of the shift handover, which include molding new nurses into their professional role and upholding norms. The potential teamwork benefits of handover, such as increasing group motivation and morale, have also been identified (Thurgood, 1995). Based on the United Nations Rule of Law, the purpose of handover note is to provide the staff member’s successor with key knowledge and information regarding the position so that the transition period is as short and smooth as possible (<http://www.unrol.org>). Hence, it can be as an orientation instrument for a new staff to get better and clearer understanding about their task and responsibility, procedures, other employees job functions, and organization culture and values.

Handover procedures as regulated in BMZ’s Internal Regulation 20/3, in connection with staff changes served the purpose of improving continuity and avoiding loss of knowledge (Handover procedures at BMZ, 2009). In the case of BMZ, where the nature of job requires a frequent change of jobs within the ministry, documented handover “provides a systematic basis for improving institutional learning within the organization that is beneficial for both the ministry and individual employees. It allows greater productivity and continuity in discharging duties. It also provides valuable support to staff members in tackling the special challenge of rapidly developing the skills needed when taking on a new post” (Handover procedures at BMZ, 2009, p.1).

In contrast, some organizations that practiced handing over note, sometimes it does not really reflect on the aim of the function and purpose of handover note. It is merely seen as a fulfillment of one of the HR requirements or part of required document to be submitted to the superior or HR before the person can be released from the organization.

Research Method

This study used a qualitative research approach to capture the respondents' understanding of handing over note as practiced in UDA. The study highlighted the perceptions of five staffs who experienced and involved in the handing over note.

Selection of Respondent

In qualitative research, respondents are not generalized but specific persons were selected in this study. UDA's structure consists of four management levels which are top management level, manager level, executive level and non-executives level. Under one roof, they are compliment to each other in doing their job. In this study, only top management level and manager level were involved. Employees were selected from managerial level in different level of seniority and from different divisions at UDA Holdings Berhad. They were still actively working; they are from different units and in various positions from top management such as Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Chief Finance Officer (CFO), Head of Division (HOD), Head of Department or Section to manager level. Most importantly, they are people who were involved in the process of handover notes, either as a giver or receiver of the notes. The criteria of the selection of respondents are as follows:

- 1) Directly and indirectly involved in handing over notes process
- 2) Reasonable accessibility to the researcher
- 3) Willingness to participate and contribute in the study

Respondent selection can affect the data quality and output of this study. Thus, the selection of respondents in this study is based on their functions, have variation, knowledgeable and experience in the subject discussed, able to reflect and articulate about the subject.

In determining the number of respondents, the concept of 'theoretical saturation' by Glaser & Strauss (1967) and Strauss & Corbin (1998) were adopted. Theoretical saturation occurs in data collection when:

- (a) "no new or relevant data seem to emerge regarding a category,
- (b) the category is well developed in terms of its properties and dimensions demonstrating variation, and
- (c) the relationships among categories are well established and validated" (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 212).

In other words, the researcher continues expanding the sample size until data collection in the interviews supplies no new data (Douglas, 2003; Goulding, 2002; Locke, 2001).

Data Collection

Data was collected through a series of in-depth interviews and followed up with email or phone conversations. This study focused on the Interview Guide Approach in gathering data. The approach was used because of two reasons. First, it allows for a maximum opportunity for the researcher and the respondent to discover any emerging subject in depth. Second, it ensures common scope coverage during interviews with different respondents (Azahari, 1994). Each interview was voice-recorded with the respondents' permission and was fully transcribed. Besides in-depth interviews, review of documents, observation on the current practice, approach, and method of handing over notes were also made. The concept of handing over note, how the respondents perceived the status of handing over note at their organization and, the importance of handing over note were extracted through the analysis and interpretation of data using a pattern matching qualitative analysis.

Besides in-depth interviews, observation on the current practice, approach, and method of handing over notes were also made during the study. This is because through observation, more data is gathered by the researcher through the process of watching behavior, events, or noting physical characteristics in the respondents' natural setting either direct or indirectly.

Secondary data was obtained from the existing documentation of handover notes such as company term and condition, HR letter of transfer of staff, and any handover note or forms used.

Existing handover notes were also reviewed by the researcher to get better understanding on the handover note process and contents. According to Glesne and Peshkin (1992) and Lincoln and Guba (1985), documents are potentially a prosperous source of information that is traditionally and contextually related and grounded in the cultural environment.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Data analysis and interpretation were guided by the specific purposes of this study. The main idea was to facilitate the finding of knowledge on how handing over note in corporate sector was implemented and practiced. The interview's interpretation was given to the respondents to check on the accuracy of the information understood during the interview process. Then, the information extracted from the interviews was analyzed and interpreted using a pattern matching qualitative analysis. A "pattern matching" approach introduced by Yin (2003) was adopted in analyzing data involving generalizing a particular set of results to theoretical propositions. It involves predicting a pattern of outcomes based on theoretical propositions to explain what researcher expects to find. The analysis of result thus relied on *analytical* generalization (Yin, 1984) and not on *statistical* generalization as utilized in most survey research as according to Nazari and Kwee (2003). The analysis answered the questions of what and how handing over notes practices and the understanding of it, provided perceptions of the status and important of handing over notes to the respondents and described the issues and problems rose about handing over notes. The findings were the result of transcribed interviews, coding the interviews transcriptions to reach at the concepts and categories, memos written on and during the interviews, the literatures and the data analysis.

Findings and discussions

The purpose of the analysis is to elaborate the respondents' insight and understanding on handing over notes. The researcher discussed the findings based on analysis of data from the interviews and observation and other documentation to fulfil the objectives of the study which are:

1. Respondents' understanding on handing over note.
2. Respondents' perceptions toward the status of handing over note in their organization.
3. Respondents' perceptions of the importance of handing over note

1. Respondents' understanding on handing over note

The respondents' understanding of handing over note could be categorized into four themes which are: 1) a document of status report and expectation; 2) a description of job functions and responsibilities; 3) a parting ritual; and 4) a transmission of authority.

Handing Over Note is a Document of Status Report and Expectation

They stated that handing over note is in essence a document prepared by a person who is leaving his/her position to be passed on to the successor so as to assist him/her to know the status of the tasks at hand and what need to be pursued. They felt that it is very necessary for the successor to know the status of the tasks completed, unresolved or terminated and also all the activities or initiatives planned. This document will facilitate the successor to know what, where and when he/she needs to begin, carry on and follow up the tasks and who to contact and be involved in the project. The respondents' understanding of the concept of handing over note is consistent with the definition by (Mayhew, n.d.) which explained that project status, work processes and procedures are simply captured in a handover notes and for that reason, these notes serve as a road map for carrying out tasks according to the company's standards or department specifications. One of the respondents appropriately mentioned:

Staffs that is leaving the company, he/she needs to write a handover note to let the next person who is taking the position or task to know the job status. It is important to let the successor know what and how the duties are, i.e. what is the pending task and what next to be done, what has been done and how it was implemented, what has been planned, how to execute it and who to be contacted (ZMA). The respondents also mentioned that with the presence of handover note, the

successor is bounded to complete and continue the job and responsibilities effectively. This point is illustrated by one of the respondents as follow:

“By having this handover note, all the important information is there. So, your superior will expect you to complete the tasks effectively. Provided the handover note is written in details and complete” (RH).

Handing Over Note is a Description of Job Functions and Responsibilities

All respondents viewed handing over note is used as guidance to successor to see a broader picture of his/her duties and responsibilities and it provides the successor with key knowledge and information about the position and the organization. The note also facilitates the successor to understand the overall functions of other employees and the divisions. Moreover, it provides a better and clearer understanding about the job processes, procedures, other employee's job functions, and organization culture and values. This understanding is in line with the elaboration of handover note by United Nations Rule of Law stated that handover note provides the staff member's successor with key knowledge and information regarding the position so that the transition period is as short and smooth as possible (<http://www.unrol.org>). Several of the respondents expressed their view on this handing over note as follows:

Most importantly, handover note gives the successor a 'helicopter view' of the jobs and duties to be carried out and all the key information are there (FY).

Handover note is written information to be given to the staff that is still working, normally to the superior if the successor is not coming yet. The information includes all about things need to be done, official duties and responsibilities, the related files and assets under the leaving staff. “When you entered to a new workplace, you have a very little knowledge about the job and the place, in term of culture, relationship among the staffs, relationship with the clients such as the loans portfolio, blacklisted customers, blacklisted developers, blacklisted lawyer and etc. So you have to know all these business community even not in depth but at least you get the outline briefing from the predecessor in the handover note” (RH).

Handing Over Note is a Parting Ritual

The respondents generally felt that the ceremony associated with handing over note is regarded as a parting ritual whereby before someone who is leaving the position will officially pass the handover note to the successor. It was conducted either formally or casually such as during dinner or farewell party. One of the respondents stated that handing over note is a symbolic ceremony of farewell. He explained that this ceremony was usually organized for the people at a higher level position such as the National Chief Police and Secretary General, in which case it was conducted formally. In the police service, in particular, the official ceremony of handing over note is accorded a higher degree of formality to pass the baton to next successor. This point was appropriately explained by the respondent as follow:

Official ceremony of handing over note was held for senior position such as National chief Police and Secretary General. No ceremony for junior or lower position. It is an official ceremony with a witness and passing the baton. It was just a symbolic (RH).

Handing Over Note is a Transmission of Authority

The fourth theme of respondents understanding of handover note could be described as a transmission of authority. As one respondent indicated, “It carries a transmission of power from one person to one person” (HA). To all respondents a properly prepared written handover note could fulfill the need of effective transmission of authority in several useful ways. They believed that the document itself is a form of certificate which warrants the holder to feel and to act in accordance with the authority transferred or granted to him/her. They assaulted that the recipient of such document would fell physiologically busted and assured that the new position and the attendance authority is rightfully his/her. This kind of confidence is necessary for the replacement staff to have so that they could perform the task with confidence and certainty. On top of that, the same document would also serve as a warrant or credential for the holder when dealing with the third parties. This testimonial of authority would facilitate his/her initial interaction as well as avoid

possible bureaucratic inconveniences or obstacles. One of the respondents highlighted another aspect of transmission of authority by saying that the handing over note could be a strategic measure against potential imposters intend on fraudulently act on behalf of the organization. The above ideas are aptly illustrated by one respondent as follow:

If I'm leaving my position, I'm handing over my responsibilities together with authority to my successor. This is normally involved with external customer/party because they don't know what happened internally unless they have been told earlier. Let me give an example, "Let's say I'm leaving this company and you are my successor. In my handover note, I'll put all the contact persons to follow up with for example Project A. You will follow up with our external customer for Project A, for example, Minister XYZ at MOF. When you call/meet the Minister XYZ, you will introduce yourself and inform him/her that you're now replacing me and I have handed over the Project A to you and from now on you are the person who will deal with him/her. With all the details you explained to the Minister XYZ which you gained from the handover note or from me directly, you'll convince the Minister XYZ that you're the authority person to discuss on the project". You carried the authority to follow up with him/her on the Project A status. You can't simply go and ask the Minister XYZ about the Project A without details information that can convince him/her on your authority to discuss about the project or probably the Minister XYZ will just ignore you or the company will lose the project (HA).

2. Respondents' perceptions toward the status of handing over note in their organization

The five respondents interviewed in this study were in consensus that handing over note at UDA has not gained much attention. To them, the practice of handing over note in UDA is still at a very primordial stage. In fact, to my knowledge, the five staffs in my division who left the company after their application for the VSS were approved did not even write proper handing over notes. Some of them, just verbally briefed the remaining staff, while others did not even do so. In other cases, upon checking with my colleagues and the superiors of the retired staffs, I discovered that most of them did not prepare any written handover notes. What they did was just verbally talked to the staff that they felt would be the likely candidate to replace them and the staff concerned were asked to take down the notes. To a large extent, my observations were also alluded to by the respondents during the interviews. From the interviews conducted, the respondents' perceptions of the status of handing over note in their organization could be grouped into three major themes: 1) handing over note is in dire need of a systematic process; 2) variability in handing over note is remarkable; and 3) handing over note has no legal authority and implication.

Handing Over Note is in Dire Need of a Systematic Process

The respondents' perceived that the status of handing over note in UDA is far from satisfactory. To them, it is in fact, in dire need of a systematic process. They are of the opinion that the practice of handing over note in UDA is inconsistent and devoid of logical structure or process. They reported that there is no standard guideline for any aspects of handing over note was available in the organization. The respondents also felt that whatever the practice adopted now was primarily acquired through random experiences, without clear guideline, and the understanding about handing over note among all level of employees is incoherent. To the respondents, without such a clear process, methods or procedures, the number of mistakes and errors either due to human or technology would become rampant in the organization. To this affect, one of the respondents mentioned that, "We need a systematic process to make sure it is successful" (RH).

Variability in Handing Over Note is Remarkable

Analysis of the available documents related to the process of handing over note found in the HR department as well as the actual documents shown by the respondents revealed that there is not fixed standard of handing over note practiced in UDA. This finding is not surprising because even in the health-care industry which found to be ahead of other services in term of standardized practice of handing over note was also reported by Horowitz (2006) that the standardization of the structure of handover is not widely available. Based on their own experiences and their knowledge about the practice of handing over notes in other organizations, the five respondents revealed that

the handover note were prepared mainly based on individual's preference and style. This includes the contents of handover note, the procedures of keeping it, the methods of handing it over, the people involved and others. One of the respondents reported that he did not know how it was supposed to be like in the official standard format. He just prepared it by listing out the projects and all the related files:

“I just list out the project I handled and all the files. I did not know how it supposed to be in an official way” (MAH).

Other respondents reported:

Currently the practice at UDA is in various versions. It IS depends on the superior or the staff creativity and preferable in style of writing it (RH).

Some respondents explained that the wide variance in the practice of handing over note could be attributed to the lack of emphasis given by the training department. I am in total agreement with the respondents on this matter. My close examination of the training records revealed that there was no mention of the subject either at the policy level, the curriculum or the treatment of the curriculum level. Furthermore, the subject of handover note was also no where mentioned in any of the minutes by the training department's meeting. Respondents assessment of the variable status of the practice of handing over note which is related to training was further strengthened by two of them who even specified the kind of training needed. They felt that the training should at least cover the relevant content and format of handover note:

It's not a full training needed perhaps. It's a matter of practice. It is the ability to capture all important points of discussion and putting it into paper (FY).

Handing Over Note has No Legal Authority and Implication

The five respondents perceived that the handover note should be somehow legally binding and therefore it is necessary to be included in UDA's term and conditions of service. It must be one of the requirements to be prepared by any staff that is leaving the position or organization. The inclusion of handing over note in the company regulation is one of the efforts to ensure effective integration into the practice. Otherwise, the staff will take it for granted. In relation to these practices, two respondents confidently responded by saying:

It is good to have it in our internal regulation. We should include it and it should be imposed by HR (HA).

Furthermore, one of the respondents emphasized on the superior's role to ensure the submitted handover note is of good quality. Another respondent highlighted that superior or leader should also pay serious attention to the content of the handover note. If it is insufficient, the superior should instruct the staff to amend it accordingly. These points are also found in BMZ's Internal Regulation 20/3, which stated that “superiors shall ensure the quality of the handover notes by checking that they are of the appropriate length, are factually accurate and are tailored to the specific characteristics of the division concerned” (Handover procedures at BMZ, 2009, p.3). The points from the two respondents are as follows:

The boss has to check on the content of the handover note either it is true or not and sufficient or not. If it is not complete, the boss can ask the staff to do it back and will only say yes once he/she is satisfied (MAH).

3. Respondents' perceptions of the importance of handing over note

The five respondents see handing over note should be given more attention in the corporate sector as it serves important purposes for the organization to maintain continuity. Specifically, respondents' perception of the purposes and functions of handing over note could be classified into six major themes: 1) an anchor for organization stability; 2) treasure chest for organization history and memory; 3) rail track leading to organization goals; 4) parameter for evaluation; 5) transmission and maintenance of culture; and 6) hallmark of accountability.

Anchor for Organization Stability

The respondents mentioned that handing over note can be a ground for staff to refer to in case of emergency or uncertainty whether it involved a new staff or the current staff. This is because

normally, the person in charge is the one who knows every single thing about what has happened. So, when the person is no longer in charge, we wanted the division or organization to remain stable and sustainable by ensuring that all the required information and documents are available and transferred. One of the ways is by having a good handing over note. It can be a map for everyone to hold on to in the times of turbulence. Documented handover provides valuable support to staff members in tackling the special challenge of rapidly developing the skills needed when taking on a new post” (Handover procedures at BMZ, 2009, p.1). One of the respondents gave an example based on his experience at his former company whereby he was in distress to solve one problem. The matter occurred before he took over the position. Unfortunately, the problem emerged again during his time. During the process of digging all the documents to get all the information and the proof, he happened to come across one document which provided him with very good and vital information to support him in solving the problem. Surprisingly, when he looked into the source of the document, it was a handover note from the previous person that he never met. He then smiled. He added that he just could not imagine if he did not find the information as stated in the handover note which was really valuable for him to solve the problem. In his words:

“I suddenly came across one document with comprehensive information which I found it was very helpful for me to be included as one of very important input for my case”. I flip back to the front pages to see who is diligent enough to write those details information and surprised me; it was a handover note wrote by the previous person who was holding this position for about 5 years back. I just can’t imagine if the information was not there (RH).

Treasure Chest for Organization History and Memory

Several respondents viewed that compilation of handover note would be valuable document for organization history and memory. Such compilation or book reflected what has been done at the organization from one person to another and from one generation to another. This is because the handover note is sketched in details about what had happened previously. The existence of the compilation or a book of handover note would help the present staff trace the history of the program, project or people involved in that position. It is a book of memory. We can refer the book at anytime. It is really great if we can compile the handover note into a book. “It will be permanent documented history properly executed at the exit point of former employee” (RH).

Rail Track Leading to Organization Goals

The five respondents perceived that handing over note is important as organization’s track record from one person to the next person to maintain the knowledge in ensuring business continuity. Collins and Porras (1994) highlighted in their book titled *Built to Last* that the “ability to manage continuity and change is the secret to an enduring great company” (p.xv). Moreover, the respondents believed that organizational goal will not be achieved if the people in the organization do not perform because individual performance can affect division performance and subsequently the company performance. One of the respondents stressed that handover note makes successor’s life easier in ensuring the task continues without disruptions. The successor can follow the guideline stated in the handover note to ensure what has been targeted at the individual level is achieved. Ultimately, it will contribute towards the achievement of division’s and organization’s target:

Handing over note is important to simplify successor’s job to ensure work is continuous and not suspended. He just needs to follow the guideline stated in the handover note. So what has been targeted to be completed is achievable at both, individual level and division level. From there is where the organizational target is also achieved (MAH).

Parameter for Evaluation

One of the respondents identified that handing over note can be important tools to measure staff’s or division’s performance. In another word, it is a parameter of evaluation. One of the items highlighted in his handover note is things that has been completed or his achievements. In the handover note, he clearly listed out what he had achieved throughout the duration of your services for that position at the division. He was surprised by his boss when his boss praised him on his achievement during his farewell party on his last day. He felt he was really been appreciated when

he heard his boss comment and a big applause from his colleagues. He realized that his boss had read his handover note. He was wrong when he thought his boss would not read it. This is illustrated by the respondents as follows:

During my farewell at my previous company, it was quite a surprise to me when my boss mentioned about what I have achieved throughout the years of my service. "I don't know how to react at that time but I received a big applause from my colleagues". I felt appreciated. From that I realized that my boss had read my handover note because some of the things he mentioned were happened long time ago. At first I thought he wouldn't have the time to read it. "The farewell was on my last day. I have submitted my handover note just the day before" (RH).

Transmission and Maintenance of Culture

The respondents indicated that handing over note is part and parcel of the process of cultural transmission and maintenance in the organization. The people in the organization continue to follow the patterns of knowledge sharing and information transfer through a good practice of handing over note as exhibited by the previous generation. Once it has been embedded in the organization culture, not much effort need to be taken in order to consolidate the handing over note into organization practice. This point was appropriately made by one respondent as follows:

For example, in my previous company, whoever resigned, we already know we have to submit the handover note because it is a practise there. When you joined the company, for sure you will receive a handover note from your predecessor even though the post has been vacant for quite some time. "*Ianya telah menjadi budaya sejak generasi datuk nenek lagi*" (It has been a culture for generations) (ZMA).

Hallmark of Accountability

One of the respondents mentioned that he did his handing over note because he regards it as part of his accountability. He had the option of not doing it but since he perceived it important for his successor and considered it as his job's accountability to share all the information and knowledge, he did it anyway. Moreover, the respondent mentioned that he wanted to maintain a good reputation with his former superior and shows his level of professionalism:

"First, it is because of my responsibility and I want to leave the place with a good name. Since it is important for me to share my knowledge and information that I knew about this job and position, so I count it as part of my accountability. I don't want to spoil my reputation with my superior because towards the end I get nothing to lose". Second, it shows my level of professionalism in delivering my tasks to my successor (RH).

Staff who is leaving should know their responsibility before leaves the company and this include submission of handover note (HA).

Conclusion, Implications and Recommendations

Conclusion

In general, the concept of handing over note is not something new for all the respondents. They had a basic knowledge of what handing over note is all about. A good handover note substantively present job functions and responsibilities, status report and expectation, transmission of authority and symbolize a parting ritual. With the existence of handing over note, the successor stipulates and bounds to complete and continue the job, and carry out the responsibilities effectively. The practice of handing over note at UDA is currently far from satisfactory. What has been practiced is totally based on the staffs' experience and individual's preference and style. As a result, the practice of handing over note at UDA is varied. Thus, a standard handover note and a systematic process are needed as a guideline for a staff and the management. Integration with the IT system would be more benefit to facilitate the superior and HR department in managing the handing over note. Therefore, training should be given for those improvement and initiatives. The practiced of handing over note at UDA is also not legally binding. It was merely emphasized by the superior or the leader and the own initiative taken by the leaving staff. Hence, superiors play an important role to ensure the handover note is prepared before the staff leaves the company or the position.

Generally, handing over note is important for the individual staff in performing the tasks and for the organization to ensure business continuity and stability. It serves the purposes for both individual and organization level. At the individual level, it is used as a hallmark of accountability, a parameter for evaluation to measure the staff's achievements and performance, and a map for staffs to refer to in case of emergency or uncertainty or in the times of turbulence; an anchor for organization stability. At the organization level, handover note would be used as a rail track to achieve organization goals, as a part and parcel of transmission and maintenance of organizational culture and a valuable document for organization history and memory.

Implications

The findings of this study have several implications. One of the most important to note is the new knowledge found from this study has contributed to a better understanding of the concept, the status and the importance of handing over note at the corporate level. Since no research found yet in this subject so far, the findings of this study has significant contribution to the body of knowledge. The findings can also be used as a benchmark for other corporate organizations in understanding the concept, status and the importance of handing over note.

This study provides further actions and effort to be taken by HR in implementing a systematic handing over note and standardize of the handing over note in UDA. This study provides input for HR in policy development, policy review and policy alignment with regards to the handing over note to make it legally binding. It also provides input and guidance for training department in preparing the training needs analysis.

In addition, findings from the study can also be used by training providers or HR consultants to design relevant training program in the area of handing over note in order to cater for individuals who are responsible or involved in designing and implementing handing over note.

Recommendations

Based on the study, there are two types of recommendation. First, the implementation of handing over note to be taken by UDA and second is suggestion for future research. Some recommendation highlighted for UDA to be taken into consideration in order to practice handing over note in the company as an effort of maintaining continuity. The recommendations are as follows:

1. Awareness of the important of implementing the handing over note should be given to all staffs and leaders in the company.
2. A standard handover note and a systematic process should be developed and designed to guide and facilitate the staff s and the management.
3. Training should be provided to all categories of staffs to be well versed in their understanding of handing over note so that the practice becomes more effective.
4. Policy should be revised, developed or aligned with the company's terms and conditions as an effort to ensure the handing over note practice become a culture and legally binding.
5. Leaders or superiors in UDA should play their role to support the policy and ensure the practice of handing over note is in place.
6. UDA to integrate the handover note in the current company's system to make it easy for the leaving staffs to fill up the handover note and facilitate the superior and HR to manage the handing over note. Moreover, this initiative will make it traceable and easily accessible from both; intranet and internet.

In addition, based on the study's findings, the following recommendations are made for future research:

1. It is suggest expanding the respondents to all level of positions from various sectors such as public, private and GLC. It may also include a cross-cultural study on neighboring countries to obtain bigger perspectives and findings which can benefit HRM and researchers.
2. More details research should be conducted specific on the practice and the effectiveness of handing over note.
3. it is interesting if researcher can do a document analysis to develop a model for a good quality of handover note to be used in corporate organizations covering various sectors.

4. Future research should be carried out by using quantitative research which attempt to measure the impact of handing over note and organizational performance on ROI (Return on Investment).

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