"An Empirical Study: Human Resource Practices in the Medical Device Sector in the West of Ireland."

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Statement

This Thesis is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for achieving a Masters of Business in Innovation and Strategy Management.

Declaration

I hereby declare that this dissertation is my own work, except where duly acknowledged and has not been submitted for any other purpose in any other Institute.

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To Mum and Dad, thanks for all the love, support and encouragement you have given me over the past 23 years. Without ye this would not be possible!!

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Glossary of Abbreviations:

BT:	British Telecom
CEO:	Chief Executive Officer
CIPD:	Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development
CSO:	Central Statistics Office
EU:	Europe Union
HR:	Human Resource
HRM:	Human Resource Management
IBEC:	Irish Business and Employers Confederation
IR:	International Rectifier
IT:	Information Technology
GMIT:	Galway Mayo Institute of Technology
NCC:	National Competitiveness Council
NCPP:	National Centre for Partnership and Performance
NHS:	National Health Service
NUIC:	National University of International College
PMPA:	Private Motors Protection Association
RIM:	Research in Motion
SHRM:	Strategic Human Resource Management
UK:	United Kingdom
US:	United States
USA:	United States of America

Executive Summary

This thesis's key features are Human Resource Practices which are conducted and implemented in the west of Ireland. It analysis's different HRM practice's, various HRM's strategies, high performance organisation techniques and best practices in HR.

Chapter 1:

This is the introduction to the thesis. It outlines the objectives and the rationale of conducting the research. It provides the foundation for the following chapters.

Chapter 2:

The literature is analyses as far back as the late 19th century due to evaluating the differences between personnel management and HRM. The focus of the literature evaluated is regarding HR polices and best practices in HR. This chapter provides the most recent literature available on the subject matter.

Chapter 3:

The purpose of this chapter is to identify the methodology that was chosen by the researcher to address the research study. This chapter demonstrates how the research aims were investigated regarding the research approach undertaken; the research method applied and the research tools used. They are also limitations to the research provided along with ethical considerations which were taking into account while completing the research.

Chapter 4:

The purpose of this chapter is to reveal the information that was obtained during the research process. This chapter commences with background information regarding the case study company and the development of HR policies within the company.

Chapter 5:

This chapter concludes the full thesis and the author gives an opinion on certain topics. There are also recommendations provided.

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

The primary motive for this research to be conducted is the workforce has been recognised as an organisations link to gaining competitive advantage. HRM assists employees and essentially helps to utilise this resource. The writer intends to access the HRM practices within a medical device company and analyse whether or not this is the explanation for them gaining a strong competitive advantage. The author feels this research will add to the existing body of knowledge based on epistemology (knowledge acquirement). This issue has been researched previously by numerous academics such as Harvey in 2001; but as these HRM practices have been revolutionised and are involved in an ever changing environment it is a requirement to continuously research this issue.

Research will identify the different aspects of HRM and its best practices. The information gathered will provide a unique insight into the HRM practices within this medical device company. The medical device sector is affected by a range of external factors, including the strength of the US economy and overall health spending. This study focuses principally on issues internal to the firms and particularly the human resource factors.

The rationale for conducting research in this particular field is that the medical device sector is an essential part of the Irish economy. It is significant regarding employment, revenue and exports. Ireland is the leading location in Europe for medical technology as nine of the top ten companies in this segment have significant manufacturing operations here. As of 2008 there was nearly 24,000 individuals employed in this sector producing exports worth in excess of six billion euro. (Forfas, 2009) "Ireland has the highest per capita employment of medical technology personnel in Europe". (All Business, 2010)

The only noteworthy increase in exports in 2009 was in the chemical and pharmaceutical sectors, which grew by 12% and the medical device exports which grew by 4%. (Smyth, R., 2010) The medical device sector is one of the few areas which have experienced growth during the global downturn. This sector is invaluable to the Irish economy and is driven by innovation.

1.2 Background to the Research

The medical device industry is a vibrant growth sector and a cornerstone of the Irish economy. There are over 140 firms operating in the sector, up from 80 a decade ago, directly employing over 11% of the manufacturing workforce (Harvey, 2001).

Clusters have developed primarily in the West and East of Ireland. Galway and the regions outside it has become a hub for major manufacturing multinationals. Dublin has developed and moved towards innovation-led companies. It is recognised and regularly commented that the West of Ireland is the prime location for medical technology companies. One of the fundamentals for medical device companies to set up in the West of Ireland is the favourable demographics. The company chosen for this research is based in Mayo. There was a ready available workforce once it commenced operations in Castlebar. The population in Mayo in 2009 was 123,839. (CSO, 2008a)

Half of the school leavers in this region continue to third level institutes. This is providing firms with an educated workforce and a broad skill set. At the moment they are three medical device companies in Mayo and another sixteen in Galway which is fifty eight kilometres from this area. This region is well facilitated with high speed broadband, good infrastructure including a motorway, ports, business parks and a national airport. In Castlebar there is a segment of the Galway Mayo Institute of Technology, GMIT which has courses specialising in technology and the health sector. Also in Galway there is the main campus of GMIT and the National University of Ireland, Galway – NUIG. All three of these Institutes provide a high calibre of individuals for possible employees for the medical device firms.

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Another factor which has enticed multinational companies to Ireland is its low corporate tax rate at 12.5% which is considerably lower than European Union (EU) average. It is feared that the European Commission will introduce a consolidated tax base across the EU. This will have drastic effects on the Irish economy as this is the one of the core reasons for Multinationals to set-up operations in Ireland.

As these medical device businesses provides and enhances the West of Irelands economy it is essential that they remain producing and operating here. It is feared that counties like India, Poland and China who have a low wage strategy and an educated workforce may attract these medical device firms to commence operations there.

The key characteristic of any medical device company is to remain competitive. As this sector is driven my innovation this is the chief fundamental in these firms business strategy's to ensure they maintain their competitive advantage. The Irish Government has recognised that innovation holds the key to future success for these enterprises. There have been organisations established such as the National Centre for Partnership and Performance who have developed public policies such as "Irish Workplaces: A Strategy for Change, Innovation and Partnership 2007–2010" to encourage innovation and try and remove any potential threats to this sector.
(NCPP, 2007)

On the 23rd of March 2010 for the first time ever there was a government minister, Batt O'Keeffe specifically designated to Innovation, Enterprise and Trade. New courses have also been developed to accommodate the need for education in this area such as the Masters in Strategy and Innovation Management which is being lectured in GMIT, Galway

Another apprehension multinationals may have had regarding operating in Ireland was that the cost of production is increasing. However a study conducted by The National Competitiveness Council (NCC) and Forfas on the 22nd of July 2010 provides evidence that the cost of doing business in Ireland is falling, which in turn is helping to win new Foreign Direct Investment for Ireland and which will enhance exports. (IDA, 2010)

1.3 Focus of the Research

Sine the mid 1990's there has been an escalating academic curiosity in the relationship between HRM and organisational performance. (Huselid, M., 1995) One popular issue within the literature is that a positive relationship exists between specific HR practices being implemented and improved organisational performance. Developments are being made to try and measure this issue and understand the link between HR practices and business performance. Academics try to measure the cause and effect of how HR practices influence business performance. It is argued that the way individuals are managed and trained effects the bottom line. However, difficulties of measurement exist as very few studies measure HRM practices in the same way. (Delaney, T.J & Huselid, M., 1996) This has lead to a great deal of ambiguity concerning the precise nature of the connection that exists between HRM and performance. This is an area that the author will review briefly in their primary research. The HR manager in the selected medical device firm will be asked whether they believe or have facts that there competitive advantage has been gained through good, innovative and new HR practices.

This thesis contains a meticulous focus placed on the HRM practices within medical technology industry focusing primarily on one company. This research project is utilising one business to construct a case study regarding the findings and conclusions. The author considers HRM to be an extremely important issue within enterprises in this sector as the medical device sector is extremely labour intensive.

1.4 Objective of the Study

Within this research project they are numerous aims. There is one key primary objective and copious secondary objectives.

1.4.1 Primary Objective

- Investigate the HRM practices the medical device company implement to remain competitive and achieve competitive advantage.

1.4.2 Secondary Objectives

- Document the HR practices utilised by the medical device sector.
- Outline the importance of the best practice HR methods in the chosen medical device company.
- Note the rationale for changes to occur within the case studies HR polices and procedures and the programmes executed to remain competitive.
- Highlight the future outlook for this medical device company and future HR practices they plan to employ.

1.5 Structure of Thesis

This thesis incorporates the following chapters:

- This chapter has depicted the medical technology sector in Ireland and the objectives of the research.
- Chapter 2 presents a review of the HRM literature.
- Chapter 3 describes the methodology used to conduct this research.
- Chapter 4 illustrates the key findings of the research which are briefly outlined above.
- Chapter 5 concludes all of the research gathered and compares the data collected with the literature reviewed. This chapter also provides recommendations.

1.6 Conclusion

This chapter has highlighted the theoretical viewpoint of the research undertaken. It has outlined the author's primary objective and provided the rationale for conducting this research. It has described the medical device sector in the Ireland and the future issues it may encounter. The objectives will be solved and analysed in the previous chapters. The subsequent chapter will evaluate all available research regarding HRM, HR polices and procedures.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

HRM was steamed from Personnel Management. They are significant differences between both. For this reason the literature is analysed as far back as the late 19th century. The focus of the literature evaluated is regarding HR polices and best practices in HR.

2.2 The origin of Personnel Management

The commencement of personnel management occurred around the end of the nineteenth century when welfare officers were formed. Their formation was primarily at the beginning focused on the protection of women in the workplace. This was due to the changing labour movement, the harsh industrial conditions and the influence of trade unions. These welfare officers were employed in the newer industries and with business that employed women to do light machine work. Welfare Officers were there to protect women in the workplace but they also had an economic goal which was to lower the level of sickness, absenteeism and obtain higher outputs from these women.

The First World War caused changes in the development of personnel management. This war saw the introduction of industrial relations. The reason being huge numbers of women were recruited for posts as most men were recruited for the war. Unskilled women had to perform craftsmen jobs which required skills. The state opened discussions with the unions for the first time regarding retraining and shift work. Employer's federations negotiated national pay rates with the unions.

The government recognised the importance of personnel management to achieve greater efficiency within the workplace. The numbers in the personnel function grew considerably during the Second World War. Throughout this period industrial relations gained greater importance for instance strikes were condemned illegal.

A trend commenced during these wars of corporations setting up their own personnel departments to manage absenteeism and recruitment. These big businesses understood the value in enhancing employee benefits as a method of recruiting, motivating and retaining workers. Examples of these larger corporations are "Marks and Spencer and Pilkington's" (CIPD, 2010)

2.3 The evolution of HRM

HRM is traced back to the late nineteen and early twentieth century. This was the era of industrialisation in Britain. Owners of factories began to understand the value of their employees. They introduced benefits such as "sick pay, pensions and basic welfare provisions" (Gunnigle *et al*, 2002, Pg. 2). This was known as the welfare tradition. The impact of the welfare approach is still vivid in contemporary HR practice. It is since then that HRM has evolved and changed to suit different calibres of staff, economic climates and company size.

Another important aspect of the progression of HRM was Taylorism which includes scientific management. In the early years of the twentieth century employers were faced with larger company size and other difficult changes such as new technology which forced them to evaluate new methods of improving industrial performance. "In the US, Taylor led the way by pointing to the efficiency and profitability benefits to be gained through greater standardisation of work system methods" (Gunnigle *et al*, 2002, Pg. 3). Taylorism helped develop competence by adapting a systematic approach to job design, training, selection, work measurement and payment.

Elton Mayo, Roethlisberger and Dickson conducted studies regarding the productivity of workers. This lead to the emergence of behavioural sciences which helped HRM as it gave it knowledge for selection, training, industrial relations, motivation and payment systems. There studies concluded that employee's behaviour and productivity was shaped by motivation as well as working conditions and pay. This has highlighted the importance of team work and focus groups.

Industrial Relations (IR) has played its role in the evolution of HRM. The growth of an IR focus in HR work was a direct result of the growing influence of trade unions. In Ireland, Jim Larkin lead the era of "new unionism" with the Irish Transport and General Workers Union. There were conflicts between employees and employers which lead to the Dublin Lockout of 1913. This caused employers to recognise the value and legitimacy of unions. Trade Unions membership increased and employee and employer associations became visible.

Growth in the size and complexity of firms commanded increased knowledge of workforce management especially in the area of IR. This lead to the movement of collective bargaining at industry level to the level of the company.

The 1960's and 1970's saw a considerable increase of the number of staff engaged in personnel work. This was due to factors such as the increase in employment legislation and the economic climate – there was full employment. "In the early 1970's, there was evidence of much recruitment, selection, training and payment system activity in the practice of personnel management" (McKenna, E. & Beech, N., 2008, Pg. 2). This occurred due to labour shortages which encouraged the method of retaining and training staff members. This gave employers a skilled workforce with higher commitment to the business. This gave strength to trade union bargaining power.

However a change in the economic climate in the 1980's which introduced a recession caused the role of trade unions to change as the threat of strike became less effective. Employers could replace workers at ease. There was a reduced rate of negotiations based on collective bargaining between unions and personnel specialists, this presented the opportunity for personnel specialists to dedicate time to redundancy programmes and introducing lower pay schemes in a calm industrial relations climate.

It was in this period that personnel practitioners became aware of HRM. "There was a move away from the traditionally adversarial industrial relations of the 1970's towards an approach that sought to achieve excellence in the organisation through a committed workforce". (McKenna, E. & Beech, N., 2008, Pg. 3)

The 1980's and 1990's witnessed an era of fundamental transformation in the context and method in which people were managed. "The rise of radical conservative governments in Britain and the USA provided the political and economic backcloth to the shift in managerial thought and discourse". (Bratton, J. & Gold, J., 2007, Pg. 6) It was at this stage that businesses begun to view HRM as a technique of emphasising internal sources as a source of competitive advantage.

As personnel practitioners had preferred the method of HRM there was a requirement for training in this field. There has been a progressive increase in formal education of HR practitioners which has improved the status and competencies available within HRM. The growth in HR education has run alongside the increase in membership with CIPD (Chartered Institute of Personnel Development). CIPD is the professional body for HR practitioners in Ireland and the UK. A significant development in the move from Personnel Management towards HRM or in fact SHRM was in 1990 when two academic journals entitled "Human Resource Management Journal and International Journal of Human Resource Management" eclipsed the long established specialist journal "Personnel Review". (Legge, K., 1995, Pg. 209)

2.3.1 Differences between Personnel Management and HRM

Throughout the years one of the greatest discussions in the business environment is; are there any differences between Personnel Management and HRM and if so what are they. There is an immense divergence between HRM and personnel management. The key dissimilarities are HRM assist's greater flexibility while personnel management features set rules and regulation.

In management action, personnel management incorporates procedures, dependability and autonomy while HRM management actions consist of the business requirements, flexibility and commitments. The relationship between management and staff when personnel management is being practiced involves elements such as monitoring, observing and ruling; while HRM incorporates a fostering, encouragement and facilitating relationship. Personnel management uses a Unitary approach while HRM uses Pluralist approach.

Considerable analysis and research concluded that they are in fact significant differences between both. The key differences are as illustrated in Table One.

Table 1: The key differences between Personnel Management and HRM.

	Personnel Management *Compliance*	*HRM* *Commitment*
Psychological contract	Fair day's work for a fair day's pay.	Reciprocal commitment
Locus of Control	External	Internal
Employee Relations	Pluralist Collective Low trust	Unitarist Individual High trust
Organising Principles	Mechanistic Formal/Defined roles Top-down Centralised	Organic Flexible Roles Bottom-up Decentralised
Policy Goals	Administrative Efficiency Standard Performance Cost Minimisation	Adaptive Workforce Improving Performance Maximum Utilisation

(Guest, D.E., 1987, Pg.508)

2.4 HRM

HRM has been defined as "a strategic approach to acquiring, developing, managing, motivating and gaining the commitment of the organisations key resource – the people who work in and for it" (Armstrong, M.,1991, Pg.34)

Recent years have seen a change in the environment in which HR practices are operating in. This environment has been effect by four key trends:

- Globalisation Trends
- Technological Trends
- Trends in the Nature of Work
- Workforce Demographic Trends

It is essential that these trends are monitored and evaluated regarding the HR practices which are implemented in the business. The metamorphosis of personnel into human resource management reflects the fact that in today's business environment, highly trained and committed employees are often a firm's main real sustainable competitive advantage. (Harvey, N., 2009a)

2.5 Different HRM Practices

"HRM is a strategic approach to managing employment relations which emphasizes that leveraging people's capabilities are critical to achieving competitive advantage, this being achieved through a distinctive set of integrated employment policies, programmes and practices." (Bratton, J. & Gold, J., 2007, Pg. 7) HRM incorporates the policies and practices involved in carrying out the "people" or human resource aspects of a management position which are explained in greater detail below. The main benefits of HRM are that it attracts, develops and retains talented skilled employees. (Harvey, N., 2009) This enables the business to gain competitive advantage. HRM is the fundamental of motivating employees to strive for greater success through working more effectively and contributing to the company's success. HRM recognises that the staff are the lifeblood of any organisation. Following this are numerous HR practices which a medical device company may implement.

2.5.1 Recruitment and Selection

Anderson and Shackleton indicate that "the quality of new recruits depends upon an organisation's recruitment practices, and that the relative effectiveness of the selection phase is inherently dependent upon the calibre of candidates attracted". (Anderson, N., Shackleton, V., 1986)

Employee recruitment is a major component of an organisation's overall strategies which seek to identify and secure the people needed for the organisation to thrive and succeed. Recruitment activities need to be responsive to the ever-increasingly competitive market to secure suitably qualified and capable recruits at all levels.

The biggest issue for most business is how to find the correct candidate with the required qualifications as swiftly as possible at a low cost. The human resource department have to devise a strategy regarding their selection process. The first stage which is mandatory is determining the nature and calibre of employees necessary for the function vacant. This involves "the employment relationship and the psychological contract" (Gunnigle *et al*, 2002, pg78)

The recruitment selection process selection has to be executed to a high standard to increase the likelihood of making a satisfactory appointment. The implications of poor selection can have an enormous effect on the business as a whole.

Recruiting individuals whom are incorrect for the firm can lead to an increase in labour turnover; the company will incur extra costs, and may also lower the moral among the current workforce. This type of an individual is likely to be restlessness, unlikely to achieve good results, and end up leaving voluntarily or involuntarily when their incompatibility becomes apparent. The HR department will have to invest extra time on a further recruitment and selection process. This is the reason a good systematic recruitment process is in place within every organisation that can be amended to suit different roles which become available.

(Acas, 09)

Numerous medical device companies use specific employee recruitment agencies such as "Life Science". The reason these companies use Life Science is it enables them to gain direct access to their target employees. This agency has a specific focus on the recruitment and selection of individuals suitable for the pharmaceutical and medical sector in Ireland. (Life Science, 2009)

The following is the recruitment and selection process which is proposed by Patrick Gunnigle. It involves the following:

1. **Job Analysis:** job description, person specification and terms and conditions. This is to identify the correct tasks which will be contained within the role.

2. **Recruitment:** job advertisement, internal/external sourcing, application forms/CV and short listing for selection.

3. **Selection:** Interview, psychometric tests and assessment centres. This helps identify different traits and characteristic amongst potential candidates, which assists in deciding which candidate is correct for the vacant role.

4. **Induction:** training and socialisation.

(Gunnigle *et al*, 2002, Pg. 89)

IBEC (Irish Business and Employers Congress) recommend the following steps should be employed when recruiting and selecting a new candidate.

- Undertake a detailed analysis of the desired outcomes from the job, taking account of the profile, thinking, behaviour and competencies required;
- Map the role against other roles and the standards required;
- Benchmarking for the role externally to define high performance standards where feasible;
- Using appropriate sourcing methods to attract the desired profile of candidates;
- Agreeing the selection process and systems for evaluating the applicants against the defined standard and against each other;
- Shortlist applicants for progression to assessment and / or interview;

- Provide direct assistance with the interview process;
- Provide feedback sessions to internal candidates if required.

(IBEC, 2010)

IBEC suggest to enterprises to apply the following diagram when recruiting for individuals. (IBEC, 2010)
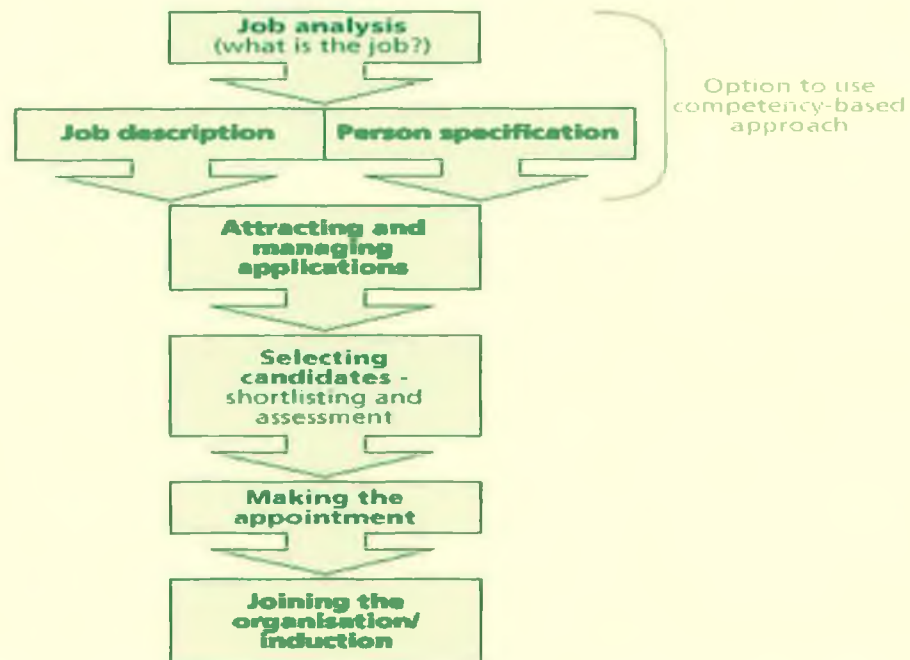
Most academics and employer unions or congresses will assist a company with defining the correct recruitment and selection process for their business. This process will vary from firm to firm. They key property of recruiting is locating the individual whom best matches your requirements and the goals and vision of the company. Selection's key fundamental is it has to be based on the best fit candidate with the requirements of the role.

2.5.2 Job Analysis

"Carrying out a thorough job analysis at the start of the recruitment process allows you to challenge any assumptions you may have about the way a particular job is done or the kind of person who should do it" . (U.K Government, 09)

Taking the time to think through the objectives of the vacancy and the firm may lead to the role appealing to a wider group of applicants with different skill sets than what was previously perceived as the skills required for the job.

Job analysis can be conducted by using different techniques. Observation is the most straight forward and readily available process. The observers would be able to view the role first hand and gain clarification from the job holders exactly what work is entailed. This is likely to be low in costs in comparison to other techniques. However they are negatives such as individuals may act differently while been observed and the tasks may vary from one day, week or month.

Another method is getting the current employee to keep a diary of the tasks they perform throughout the days for a specific time period. This requires a high degree of commitment. Interviewing the staff member regarding all the task's which they accomplish on a daily basis. The result from the research carried out creates a valid job description alongside the terms and conditions for the role.

2.5.3 Recruitment:

Recruitment advertisements and application forms are two of the most important documents as they provide potential recruits with the information regarding the organisations image and the type of candidate they are seeking. Advertising is usually the manner used for job vacancies but sometimes applicants are recruited by word of mouth, through existing employees. This is more cost effective and "the ``grapevine'' finds employees who stay longer -low voluntary turnover and who are less likely to be dismissed –low involuntary turnover". (Kirnan *et al.*, 1989).

2.5.4 Selection:

In most selection processes there is more than one method used. Interviews are used the majority of the time alongside application forms and following taking up on references given. However the Irish Times has estimated the following:

"as few as one in 14 job candidates hired during an interview process are successful"

(Monaghan, 2006)

2.5.5 Introduction and Training:

Most companies assign the new recruit with an experienced staff member to assist and make them feel more at ease as they settle into the companies' culture.

A business can decide to recruit internally or externally. Internal recruitment can provide the most cost-effective source for recruits if the existing employees skills has been improved through training, development and other performance-enhancing activities such as performance appraisal, succession planning and career planning to review performance and assess employee development needs and promotional potential. They are copious benefits to recruiting internally as it improves staff morale and job security. This recruit is aware of the firm's vision and it's more cost-effective than recruiting externally. (Hiltrop, J.M., 1999)

The reasons for promoting internal recruitment is it provides career plans for the existing employees, demonstrates management's commitment, encourages personal development, increases organisational loyalty and is quicker to recruit from inside. To recruit internally an organisation may send emails; advertise on the notice board or even in the weekly newsletter.

Other methods of externally recruitment are advertising on the company's website. Using social networking technologies such as MySpace, Facebook and Twitter has proved to extremely useful to recruiter as they can gain access to the desired demographic group. Another positive factor is; it also allows firms to reach out to people who would not essentially be looking for a post or who may not be capable to use conventional internet recruitment sites to find one.

The business could set up their own profile page updated its users on any progress within the organisation. "MySpace boasts 93 million profiles and, according to the internet analysis company Alexa, is the third-most popular site in the US (after Yahoo and Google) and the seventh most popular in the world".

One employer that uses MySpace to recruit is the US Marine Corps. In February 2006 they commenced using MySpace as a method of recruiting with banner advertisements. In April of that year the marines created a profile with videos of drill sergeants and amphibious landings.

Looking at competitors for the individual to fill the vacancy is a mode which firms have started to implement. Normally the company will approach the individual themselves or they will employ an employment agency to carry out the search. Most employment agencies have contacts in specific field which will give them access to the candidate the business may require. However this technique is frowned upon and may lead the company into hot water. In September 2008 Motorola sued RIM for poaching their employees. "Motorola threw down the legal gauntlet against BlackBerry -creator Research in Motion for approaching more than 40 of their employees". (Sage, S., 2009)

To ensure the recruiter selected becomes a loyal employee communications is imperative, training and development is fundamental and business should never stop investing in their people. Davidson states "that organisations need to be more flexible about work patterns and use the talent and resources they have". ("Recruiting for success", 2004)

As the medical device companies' products are extremely important as they can be used to save or improve a human beings life it is essential that no errors occur in the making of these products or designing them. As it's literally life or death. It is imperative to have proper induction and training process in place. It could have an extremely negative effect on the company if the correct training was not exercised.

2.5.6 Reward Management

Reward Management has become especially important in helping to attract and retain employees and also in influencing performance and behaviour at work. How the reward package is structured and applied may have a major impact on employee performance and it represents a major mediating mechanism between the requirements of those planning the organisation and the desires and interests of the employees (Gunnigle *et al*, 2002, Pg. 146). Lewis (2003) stated that appreciation or reward is not enough with a pay cheque therefore other types of rewards such as job enrichment, promotion etc should be available for employees to aim for (Schmid, B. & Adams, J. (n.d.), Pg. 4). Schuler, 1995, outlined a number of objectives that should be in an organisations reward package; to attract potential employees, assists in retaining good employees, should serve to motivate employees and to contribute to HR and strategic business plans. (Gunnigle *et al*, 2002, Pg. 147) Regarding reward management, Aer Lingus would be a recent example of using reward management to regain competitive advantage. An article published by The Irish Independent stated: "after the findings of the arbitration report, which was published by the Labour Relations Commission.... Mr Mulvey proposed that a €30m incentive fund be established by the airline in order to reward its entire staff if the airline returns to profitability within the five-year timeframe of its current transformation plan". (Mulligan, J., 2010)

2.5.7 Training and development

Training varies from basic on-the-job instruction to educational and training courses presented by providers outside the organisation. Training is united with development, as organisations plan the progression of key employees through the company, thus integrating the needs of the organisation with the career development of the individual. The literature states that once hired into the company, simply retaining employees in not enough; training has to be provided continuously to keep the skills set of the firms staff up-to-date.

Walton (1999) argues that the way development activities are conducted and coordinated is a telling index of how an organisation views and values its staff. (Gunnigle *et al*, 2002, Pg. 214) In the present poor economic climate, "Skills minister Kevin Brennan in the UK, said: "Now, more than ever, we need learning and training opportunities in place that empower people to gain the skills and training they need to get on." (Woods, D., 2010) Thus, it will benefit the companies to survive in the present economic climate. Bartlett & Ghosal have stated that employee development must "be embedded in the company's bloodstream, with all managers responsible for giving team members ongoing feedback and coaching". (Bartlett, C. & Ghosal, S., 2002, Pg. 38)

2.5.8 Employee motivation

Various definitions of motivation have surfaced over the years, for example the theorist Vroom, (1964), views motivation as a process governing choices made by persons or lower organisms among alternative forms of voluntary activity. DuBrin (1978) suggests that motivation centres on the expenditure of effort toward achieving an objective the organisation wants accomplished. (Gunnigle *et al*, 2002, Pg. 116) Steers and Porter (1987) outlined the following factors for the status of motivation:

- The necessity of attracting the right calibre of employee and engaging them in such a way as to ensure high performance remains a central concern of the productive process and productive effort.

- Competitive trends of the business environment, coupled with increased business regulation have forced organisations to seek out any mechanisms which might improve organisation effectiveness and efficiency.

- Issue of technological advancement is becoming more of a concern relating to the job design debate, hence businesses must ensure that the workforce is capable and willing to use advanced technology to achieve organisational goals.

- Having a long term perspective of the HR in an attempt to build up a pool of well skilled enthusiastic employees has brought the concept of motivation centrefold. (Gunnigle *et al*, 2002, Pg. 113)

Organisations must ensure to choose employees whose intention and work principles shape with the management approach, organisational environment and reward package. Microsoft Ireland is a good example of motivating their workforce as they were voted "Best Workplace in Ireland" of 2009. A video called "myStoryvideo" was created by Microsoft showing employees giving a tribute of the pride and loyalty they have for Microsoft. They are encouraged to aim high and learn on a daily basis. Additionally, with the positive view of teamwork and trustworthiness it makes it easier for the employees to achieve their goals.

Microsoft offers numerous facilities such as the gym, massages, reflexology when stressed, canteens, games (pool table, x-box,) and much more. Morale events and work parties are also organised to boost enthusiasm. These benefits motivate employees to work harder within the workplace which creates a positive impact on the business itself regarding profitability, effective productivity, etc which are all important to maintain competitive advantage. (Microsoft Corporation, 2009)

2.6 HRM Strategy

Strategic HRM has been defined by CIPD as "All those activities affecting the behaviour of individuals in their efforts to formulate and implement the strategic needs of business" (CIPD, 2009)

Strategic HRM is the general approach to the strategic management of human resources in line with the objectives of the company's future course it desires to obtain. It is focused on longer-term people issues and macro-concerns about structure, quality, culture, values, commitment and matching resources for the correct need in the future.

To gain competitive advantage an organisation has to match its human resources correctly with the business strategy. This involves implementing the correct HR policies and procedures to match the businesses vision and aims. This time is vital for success.

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Gennard and Kelly have suggested that "extensive participation between HR and line managers can create mutual benefit for both as they jointly contribute to solve business problems" (Gennard, J., Kelly, J., 1998)

A problem which has been faced by HR managers in the past which Strategic HRM has solved to a certain extent is that line managers may have viewed HR managers as not understanding the real business of the organisation and only serve as a distraction rather than adding value to the bottom line. As a result of this, HRM issues were been pushed aside by the line mangers whom were driven by budgetary concerns and they focused their full attention on production matters. Strategic HRM has changed this misconception and has enabled line mangers to see the benefits of change for the organisation as a whole.

For this link to be implemented successfully both HR managers and production mangers need to understand each other's roles and have a competent knowledge of strategy. The strategy process involves the activities which are concerned with the formation of the strategy. The strategy content refers to the actual policies chosen by the firm.

The importance of HR and business strategy coinciding and relating to each other has been highlighted by studies conducted by (Baird, L., & Meshoulam, I., 1988), (Miles, R., & Snow, C., 1984), (Wright, P.M., & McMahan, G.C., 1992) These studies have proved solid findings for firms to recognise that compiling their HR policy in line with their business strategy will aid them in gaining competitive advantage and a more productive workforce. The key element of SHRM is it develops an enterprises capacity to respond to its external environment through a more efficient deployment of human resources. As the strategy of a company is an indication of its reaction to the competitive external changes, a human capital team with a wide range of expertise's that are compatible with the corporate strategy, is a medium for satisfying the strategic objectives through promoting behavioural utility among staff.

Porter has identified three generic strategies for achieving competitive advantage. These generic strategies should be thought through when planning the Strategic HRM direction for the company. They are as follows:

1. **Cost Leadership:** this is positioning the company as a low cost provider. To be successful the firm has to be the lowest cost provider in their market. This type of business would have a "no frills" approach. It requires tight management on financials, having low overheads and being dedicated to achieving productive efficiency.

2. **Differentiation:** this is also known as product innovation. The organisation has to provide a unique product or service which attracts customers whom are willing to pay a premium price for this product or service. This company values its customers and provides an elite service.

3. **Focus:** involves choosing a narrow market segment and serving it with either being the low cost provider or offering a differentiated product or service.

(Marketing Teacher, 2010)

A firm's choice on which generic strategy they decide to execute to gain competitive advantage will provide the foundation for the context of the policies, actions and procedures throughout the organisation including HRM.

The UK government has placed significant emphasis on Strategic HRM within their health care system known as the NHS. The government as they believed it would improve the service and make all operations within the NHS more efficient.

The Guardian PMPA Group was purchased by AXA Ireland in 1999. The new CEO John O'Neill recognised that change was required as market inflationary pressures had impacted negatively on business results. He applied a Strategic HRM plan to bring the company together. This plan was done in five steps. AXA Ireland is now one of the leading insurance companies in Ireland. (AXA, 2009)

The following diagram demonstrates the key properties of SHRM;

(Wei, L., 2006, Pg.53)

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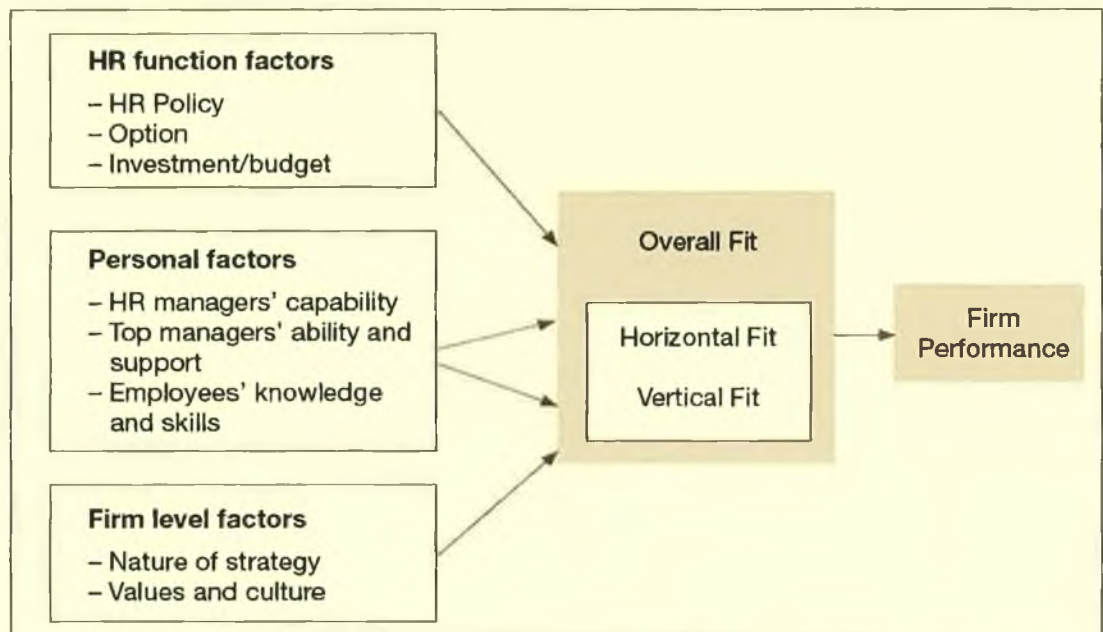
2.7 High Work Performance Organisation:

High-performance organisations are characterised as being assembled on a socio-technical systems base with a team or group approach to production, and have given a new persona to the faded image of job redesign and have improve the quality of working life movement.

There has been a sustained recovery of interest in job restructuring and design as one of several levers available to managers interested in creating high performance organisational systems. Human resources, along with IT, are now viewed as the remaining techniques offered to companies to progress their competitive position.

High Work Performance Organisations have control and advanced human resource practices which include performance appraisal, pay, promotion, employee training, development and motivation. The performance appraisal is fundamentally a chance for the employee and their line manager to get together to engage in a conversation regarding the individuals performance, development and the support required from the manager. It should not be a top down process or an opportunity for one person to ask questions and the other to reply. It should be a free flowing conversation in which a range of views are exchanged.

Performance appraisals first came to light in 1813 when as US Army General submitted an evaluation of each of his soldiers to the US War Department. The Army General used a global rating, with descriptions of his men such as "a good-natured man" or "a knave despised by all".

Performance appraisals usually re-evaluate previous results, behaviour and develop. It gives the employee an opportunity to express their feelings regarding their development and any changes they would see fit. They should also look at the future goals and development for the individual and set the basis for a career plan. (CIPD, 2009)

Performance appraisal would more be conducted every monthly at the beginning of the recruit starting and then maybe done every two months. An example of a performance appraisal system is illustrated in the diagram below:

(Web Performance Matters, 2009)

They are certain performance appraisal techniques. These techniques are as follows:

- Rating: assessing the employee's characteristics on a scale which can be straightforward yet complex with the complexity of measuring personality or behavioural traits.

- Ranking: grade employees from best to worst on their overall job performance.

- Critical incident: employee's job performance is observed and assessed giving the basis of judging and discussing their work.

- Assessment centre: interviews, tests etc are used to assess the appraises undertaken by trained assessors.

- Free form: general free-written appraisal by the appraiser is given. (Gunnigle *et al*, 2002, Pg. 179-180)

2.7.1 Benefits of performance Appraisal

There are numerous advantages to implementing a formal system if performance appraisals are planned and used correctly:

- It helps organisational decisions such as reward distribution, promotions, layoffs, and transfers.
- It may also assist managers in developing and training employees.
- It serves as an asset for individual employees when making decisions regarding career choices and the subsequent direction of individual time and effort.
- Performance appraisals may increase employee commitment and satisfaction, due to improvements in organisational communication.

An accurately managed performance appraisal system is beneficial to an organisation. However, if the tools and goals of the performance appraisal process are contrasting with organisational objectives, the performance appraisal system maybe a disadvantage to the effective organisational performance. In a team environment, some believe individual performance appraisals hamper with teamwork by overemphasising the individual.

Feedback is an element which plays a role in high performance organisations. Feedback is most efficient when it is used to deliver performance analysis in a method that is non-judgmental and does not make the employee defensive. It should be perceived as the sharing of information and views regarding the aim of moving people towards accomplishment and development. Feedback is appropriate when an employer needs to improve the performance of their employees, give necessary direction when individuals are making mistakes, let them know the cost of their behaviour, or reward people for a task well done.

Feedback is essential as it eliminates assumptions by all parties. Employees know what is expected of them and perform better when trying to meet a target or aim. Feedback should be giving privately as both parties feel comfortable in their environment. Giving feedback, both positive and negative, on a regular basis heightens an employee's trust in the company and will help them to be more accountable in the future. It's an excellent morale booster and will motivate people who want to progress. (Goliath, 2002)

It is vital to gain feedback from your customers as "a majority of unsatisfied customers (almost 95%) never complain. It takes effort on the part of the customer to draft a letter of complaint or to phone in to voice displeasure." (Ezine, 2008) The easiest option for the customer is to just do their business with another business. Fergal Quinn (founder of Superquinn) realised this and Superquinn was the first supermarket in Ireland that asked for feedback from their customers. This lead them to implementing various techniques to please the customer such as bag packing, rainy day umbrella service, carrying heavy items to the customers' car. Superquinn now has a loyal base of customers.
(Superquinn, 2009)

2.8 Best Practices in HR

HRM has had to reposition itself over its existence, this being most apparent in the need to demonstrate that HRM adds value rather than it being a cost to be reduced. A fundamental concept of strategic HRM is the effect of HR practices depends on the specific (internal and external) context. (Paauwe, J. & Boselie, J.P., 2005) This is referred to as the "best fit" or contingency approach. The high-performance paradigm which was stimulated to a degree by Jeffrey Pfeffer is being promoted as "best practice" for employers, also known as the universal approach. It is based on the foundation that the practices associated with it enhance performance levels to a higher standard than those associated with more traditional practices.

The debate regarding contingency versus the universal approach is tantamount within the HR sector. They are those whom favour the universal approach such as Huselid, while others are not in favour of this "one size fits all" approach. (Huselid, 1995) However both of these approaches assume that the policies that are put forward are adopted and implemented. This is not the case and is an elementary assumption which is not justified. For different reason's well designed policies are not adopted in the manner in which they are intended. (Legge, 1995) A company's HR policies must cultivate employee skills, abilities and motivation which in turn enable the employees to perform in a manner which has a positive impact on the implementation of a particular strategy. (Bowen, D.E. & Ostroff, C., 2004)

2.9 Best Practice linked to Firm Performance

It is important to note that employee's, managers and HR academics will have different perceptions of the importance of HR practices. (Purcell et al, 2003) suggests they are two fundamental's which makes it very hard to justify that best practices are lined to firm performance; firstly it is credible to assume the greater the number of HR practices the higher the returns as its reasonable to state that the lucrative firms can afford more extensive and expensive HRM practices. Secondly, it is not known how or why HR policies influence performance. The hypothesis in this field has characteristically embraces an input-output model. This has been illustrated meticulously by Guest in the below Conceptual Model

Table 2: The Conceptual Model

HRM Strategy	HRM Practices	HRM Outcomes	Behaviour Outcomes	Performance Outcomes	Financial Outcomes
⟶	⟶	⟶	⟶	⟶	
Differentiation (Innovation)	Selection Training Appraisal	Commitment	Effort/ Motivation Cooperation	*High:* Productivity Quality Innovation	Profits
Focus (Quality)	Rewards	Quality	Involvement	*Low:* Absence	Return on Investment
Cost (Cost – Reduction)	Job Design Involvement Status & Security	Flexibility	Organisational Citizenship	Labour-Turnover Conflict Customer - Complaints	

(Guest, D.E., 1997 Pg. 268)

In this model, the design of the HRM system is steamed from overall business strategy. Guest's models suggest that they are a chain of inputs on the left hand side – the different HRM strategies and a chain of outputs on the right hand side – financial outcomes. Nevertheless, little appears to be understood regarding what happens in the middle of these – which one motivates which outcome. This is referred to as the "black box" problem. The black box problem argues that inputs (people) are transformed into outputs (performance) and are hidden from the view. (Purcell *et al*, 2003)

(Purcell *et al*, 2003, Pg.2) proposes that "successful firms do invest heavily in HRM in order to sustain performance by replication and adaptation". Other researchers such as Legge suggest it's just that the "black box" has not been investigated or researched in enough dept yet. The uncertainty is highlighted in the methods of the studies conducted in this area. Some studies concentrate on the HR department (Hailey *et al*, 2005) while others focus on the value of human resources in terms of competencies and more analyse HRM in relation to a bundle of practices. (Pfeffer, J., 1994) These irregularities in research properties make it more complicated to establish a link between HR and organisational performance.

The author believes if there is a concrete link between HR and organisational performance that the underlying factors will be employee's job commitment and job satisfaction. Purcell et al, states that "a link between HR practices and measures of performance outcomes exists, then one must have certain prepositions of why this link exists". (Purcell *et al*, 2003, Pg. 5) For employee's to improve performance beyond the basic requirements they must possess the following attributes:

- Be motivated to conduct the work and do it to a high standard;
- Have the capacity to do the work because they have the necessary knowledge and skills, including how to work with others; and
- Be giving the opportunity to use their skills both in the job and more generally contributing to group work and organisational success. *(Purcell et al, 2003)*

Research conducted by CIPD in June of 2010 found that HR practices alone do not create business performance. CIPD states that HR practices can create good "human capital" or employees that are vastly skilled, extremely motivated and that are giving the opportunities to become part of the key organisational life by being given posts to do. This human capital will only be exerted into high levels of organisational performance if these individuals have a good relationship with their managers; which is incorporated in a supportive environment with strong values. These elements will encourage 'discretionary behaviour', the willingness of the individual to perform above the minimum or give extra effort. "It is this discretionary behaviour that makes the difference to organisational performance". (CIPD, 2010) Discretionary behaviour has been described as "making the sort of choices that often make up a job such as the way the job is done, the speed, care, innovation and style of job delivery". (Purcell *et al*, 2003, Pg. 3)

The medical device sector typically consists of employees working on a production line. The production line employee normally has minimal discretion and works within a highly structured and closely monitored environment. Tasks are broken down into simple processes which are performed repetitively. The writer believes that this would have a major influence on the employees job satisfaction and job commitment.

2.10 Recent Developments in HRM

HRM has changed considerably in recent times. New practices have come to light such as outsourcing or off shoring the HR department and new demographics in the workplace which have influenced the direction of HRM.

2.10.1 Outsourcing HRM

Outsourcing the HR department can be the key to attaining a more dominant and strategic role for the HR function. Outsourcing is a decision which cannot be made lightly. It needs to be carefully considered as it's not the correct option for all firms. If outsourcing is the option taken significant effort has to be given to ensure a smooth transfer of responsibilities. People management plays a significant role in gaining competitive advantage as we now have a knowledge economy.

They are advantages and disadvantages to outsourcing HR activities. They are as follows:

2.10.2 Advantages of outsourcing:

- **Reducing costs**: this is one of the key influences in many outsourcing decisions, but should not be considered in separation from other costs/ benefits.
- **Increasing effectiveness of HR delivery**: Experienced outsourcing providers can often deal with HR processes more effectively. For example, recruitment may be undertaken more quickly, reducing employee turnover costs and speeding up the pace of growth.
- **Providing greater expertise**: External providers may offer greater levels of specialist knowledge or experience than affordably available in-house.
- **Moving HR up the value chain**: Outsourcing human resource administration can lead to a shift in HR focus towards policy and decision making.
- **To aid organisational growth**: Fast-growing organisations can lack the HR capacity to deliver business objectives, making HR outsourcing an attractive solution.

2.10.3 Disadvantages of outsourcing:

- Handing over unnecessarily complex or badly understood systems to an external provider can be like "picking up spaghetti". This confines possible benefits from outsourcing. If processes cannot be improved before a move, the organisation may have to accept off-the-shelf replacements that are not specifically geared to their needs. .

- The greatest financial benefits of outsourcing often come from using sophisticated software. If effective IT systems already exist in-house, cost savings may not be achieved from an external provider;

- Good employee management practices remain essential, and the key relationship between staff and their line managers remains in-house, leaving plenty of work on manager / staff relationships that still has to be handled despite the outsourcing relationship;

- Local knowledge and ownership of human resource processes could be lost.

(Price, A., 2010)

HR activities that are often outsourced are payroll administration, employee benefits like medical insurance, human resource management (recruiting and dismissal, background interviews, exit interviews and wage reviews) and health and safety.

2.10.4 Changing Demographics

Another trend in the workplace is that there has been a significant increase in woman entering the working environment. This year in Ireland, the CSO (Central Statistics office) has released results stating that male unemployment rates increased by 86.8% and female unemployment rates are considerably lower with it increasing by 55.3%. This is an issue for employers such as the medical device companies whom have to ensure their HR policies coincide with this statistic.

(CSO, 2009)

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Just over twenty five years ago females were viewed as second class citizens in the workplace and had minimal rights and they could lose their job due to the demands of pregnancy. Women were seen as housewives not business executives. This trend has changed as females now have careers in the army, oilrigs and are involved in market research. In Ireland at the moment "more than half the country's workers are women".

(Carvajal, D., 2004)

Education is one of the main drivers of change regarding the increase of females in the working world. The role of women in the workplace is changing, particularly in terms of skills-sets and numbers participating. Women in Ireland now have higher levels of formal education than at any time in the past. In fact, within the 25–34 age group, 43% of women hold a third-level qualification, compared to just 36% of men.

(National Centre for Partnership and Performance, 2010)

There is still an issue regarding pay for example: "In Britain a female working full time earns just 82% of her male colleague's salary. (For a part-time female worker that sinks to 60%) The pay gap costs a woman with average qualifications about £250,000, during her lifetime".

(Jobsite, 2009)

These changes have caused HR policies to change and to suit the demographics of their workforce. The above demographic trends are forcing companies to experiment with different HR policies such as flexible working arrangements, which enable female employees to accommodate bosses, babies and lifestyles. The result is often an entire range of choices, from job-sharing and telecommuting to on-site child care and company-sponsored summer camps. Females can now enjoy a work life balance.

Another change in the workforce is the demographics. The demographic trends' regarding diversity is that there are more types of nationalities within the workplace. Organisations need to be flexible to adapt to different types of culture to create a smooth running of the business. The medical device sector would be costumed to having different nationalities among its labour force. Microsoft Office would be an example of an organisation that has great diversity within the workplace and is a company that has efficiently managed this trend. (Microsoft Corporation, 2009)

2.10.5 Work-life balance

The workforce, composed of both male and female workers, has changed over the years. Female average annual earnings were 72.9% of male earnings, with females earning on average €31,403 as against €43,099 for males in 2007. In quarter two of 2007, female employment increased by 21,500 or 2.4% while male employment declined by 14,600 or 1.2% over the year (CSO, 2008b). There are more female workers in the workplace which is putting pressure on organisations to have more of an open mind of family friendly commitments. Childcare and parental leave are becoming more prominent and a necessity for organisations to have in order to treat their employees more fairly.

Bob Mason, director of human resource (HR) planning at BT in 2001 once stated that "achieving a work-life balance that suits their employees is now a major issue on the business agenda...people expect employers to be more flexible and understanding of family commitments, to be valued for what they achieve rather than the hours they put in and for childcare to be more readily available, better and affordable." (Brennan, C., 2001)

In relation to Work Life Balance, organisations have arranged policies to allow employees to combine employment with other aspects of their lives e.g. children. It has also become popular where the wife is working that the husband becomes a 'house husband'. Fathers are more involved in raising their children which has lead to companies providing paternity leave.

The traditional idea of the husband being the 'breadwinner' is slowly dying which can be an issue in some countries relating to their culture e.g. in Switzerland, if a man's wife works it must be because the man is not able to provide adequately for his family. This maybe due to bigger family numbers where one parent has to stay at home to save on babysitting or crèche cost; the one who may have more qualifications and work experience continues to work to support the household. However, there is a problem of the "glass ceiling" where women find it difficult to reach the highest management levels due to their family link. In Spain and Italy the proportion of women in senior management positions is still less than five per cent. (Linehan, M. & Walsh, J., 1999, Pg. 265) This may be related to the likelihood of maternity leave, job sharing etc.

2.11 Summary

The empirical research thus far has established that the correlation between HR and organisational performance does exist. Although these studies present us with colourful findings, the author believes these studies have put forward more questions than solved. Furthermore, the studies to date have been disappointing for those trying to understand how and why HR practices effect firm performance.

The next chapter will provide an outline of the research conducted which assists in completing the objectives outlined.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to identify the methodology that was chosen by the researcher to address the research study. This chapter demonstrates how the research aims were investigated regarding the research approach undertaken; the research method applied and the research tools used. They are also limitations to the research provided along with ethical considerations which were taking into account while undergoing the research.

3.2 Objectives of the research

The main objectives are as follows:

- Utilise the research strategy method triangulation to acquire suffice data.
- Conduct an interview with a HR specialist in a medical device firm.
- Survey forty employees to gain their views of HRM within their workplace
- Conduct all research in an efficient manner
- Meet all of the targets outlined in the data gathering phase table

3.3 Research Philosophies:

All research whether quantitative or qualitative is based on some underlying assumptions regarding whether it is considered "valid" research and which research methods are appropriate to conduct the study. In order to carry out and evaluate research, it is therefore important to know what these philosophical assumptions are. They are two key philosophical assumptions: epistemology and ontological. Each term has a precise meaning in regards to assumptions of society. Both of these have been evaluated and are understood by the researcher.

3.3.1 Epistemology Philosophy:

Epistemology is the study of knowledge and justified belief. (Steup, M., 2005) It analysis how we know what we think we know. It basically is the division of philosophy that studies knowledge. It is concerned with distinguishing what is true and adequate knowledge from false inadequate knowledge. (Principia Cybernetica, 1993) This research is concerned with knowledge and adding to the existing body of knowledge which coincides with epistemology. "Epistemology concerns what constitutes acceptable knowledge in a field study" (Saunders *et al*, 2007, Pg. 102) Epistemology incorporates two core concepts: positivism and interpretive. Positivism is defined as "an epistemological position that advocates the application of the methods of the natural sciences to the study of social reality and beyond." (Bryman and Bell, 2007 Pg.16) Interpretive is classified as "research which assumes that access to reality (given or socially constructed) is only through social constructions such as language, consciousness and shared meanings. The philosophical base of interpretive research is hermeneutics and phenomenology."

3.3.2 Ontology Philosophy

Ontology is concerned with theories of existence, asking "what is the essence and nature of the world?" (King, D., & Kimble, C., n.d.). It is knowledge that is required to be experienced and interpreted. It therefore is concerned with the nature of phenomena and their existence. Ontology brings questions to the forefront as whether or not some phenomenon that we are interested in actually exists independently of our knowing and perceiving it. Ontology also highlights factors such as is what one see's and normally believes is real and independent of knowing about it, instead, an outcome or externalization of this act of cognition. (ESRC, n.d.)

3.4 Research Strategy

Triangulation is the research approach which was chosen to compile the research for this thesis. Triangulation refers to the utilisation of more than one approach to the exploration of a research question in order to improve validity in the subsequent findings. Since the high percentage of research is conducted by using a single research method; this form of research may suffer from limitations associated with that method or from the exact application of it. Triangulation presents the prospect of improved confidence within the research conducted. (Bryman, A., n.d.)

(Guest, D., 1999) proposes to measure the role of the supervisor in HRM practices through individual employee perceptions, as employees are one congregation of key stakeholders in the business environment. This is one of the reason's the author choose to carry out a questionnaire of employees in the firm which was researched. Kanter efficiently conjures up the benefits of triangulation by suggesting that "a combination of methods.... emerges as the most valid and reliable way to develop an understanding of such a complex social reality as the corporation". (Kanter, R.M, 1977, Pg. 337)

Triangulation has been described by Denzin as an approach that employs "multiple observers, theoretical perspectives, sources of data and methodologies". (Denzin, N.K., 1970, Pg 310) They are numerous advantages of merging several strategies as an integrated research approach. As previously stated it can generate results with a higher degree of confidence. This was the fundamental reason for this method to be chosen. Both questionnaires (quantitative) and semi-structured interviews (qualitative) were exercised as part of the triangulation research strategy. This enabled the researcher to cross check the information collected through exploiting both of these methods.

3.4.1 Qualitative Research

Qualitative Research is collecting, analysing, and interpreting data by observing what people do and say. (Anderson, J.D., 2006) Qualitative research methods use primary data sources such as interviews, questionnaires, focus groups or observation. It doesn't just rely on statistics or numbers like quantitative research methods. Qualitative research is used to acquire an understanding of individual's thoughts, feeling, opinions and concern regarding a subject matter. Qualitative research ensures nothing is taken for granted or ignored. The researcher observes gestures, jokes, tone of voice, facial expressions, style of dress, body language and a multitude of other details of their studies. These details aid in the enrichment of data. However qualitative research methods are not easily converted into numeric format and, in, general need to be analysed using a different set of techniques from quantitative data. (Kitchin, R. & Tate, N.J., 2000, Pg. 213)

They are different features to qualitative research such as:

- *Naturalistic:* this occurs when the researcher goes to a particular location with either a biro and pad or video/audio recording equipment. Researchers believe that the understanding of actions can be enhanced by observing it in the setting in which it occurs. Qualitative researcher's want to identify where, when, how and under what circumstances different behaviour takes place. This is the method the author performed whilst accumulating the primary information for this empirical study.

- *Descriptive Data:* the information in qualitative research takes the form of words or pictures rather than numbers. Often the descriptive data containing quotations alluded to by informants is utilised to demonstrate and validate the presenting findings. The findings of this research will contain quotations from the informants whom completed an interview and questionnaire to authenticate the conclusions.

- *Concern with process:* qualitative researchers want to understand the process and not just to be informed of the result or outcomes of a situation.

- ***Inductive:*** qualitative researcher analyses their data inductively. They don't conduct studies to find information to prove or disprove hypotheses that they have prior to their study. The theories are drawn from the fundamentals up rather than from the top down. These theories are grounded in the information. The theory is continuously being gathered and alteration's being made throughout the research until it finally emerges at the conclusion. The theory is like a piece of art that has yet to be created rather than a puzzle where the image is already known. (Bogdan, R.C. & Bilken, S.K., n.d.)

3.4.2 Quantitative Research

Quantitative research is a measurement which must be objective, quantitative and statistically legitimate. Quantitative research fundamentals are numbers and objective hard data. The options for this research are predetermined at the beginning with a large number of respondents. It requires numerous informants which formulate the sample size. The sample size for the study is determined through using statistical and probability formulas. This answer is the population in which the researcher will be required to measure to attain findings with a satisfactory degree of accuracy. Researcher's look for sample sizes which will conclude with findings with at least a 95 % confidence with a margin of error of 5% or less. Any lower of a confidence would deem the research not completely valid.

(Anderson, J.D., 2006)

3.4.3 Key differences between Qualitative research and Quantitative Research

Below are the key differences between both methods of research which have been identified by Kevin Heffernan.

- Qualitative research involves a close, possibly sustained, relationship between the researcher and researched.
- Quantitative researchers use a pre-ordained research framework, whereas qualitative researchers attempt to gain access to their subjects' views.
- Quantitative researchers often minimise their involvement with respondents and take the standpoint of an 'outsider', whereas qualitative researchers attempt to 'get close' to their respondents, running the risk of 'going native'.
- Quantitative research is frequently guided by theory, whereas qualitative research sometimes rejects theory on the basis of its aim to reflect the subjects' viewpoint(s). (Note that the often-stated contrast between quantitative research as a method for verifying hypotheses and qualitative research as a method for generating hypotheses is crude and not necessarily particularly accurate).
- Quantitative research is structured, as opposed to qualitative research, which is open/flexible and may involve the postponement of theoretical reflection.
- Quantitative research aims to produce general, law-like findings which can be deemed to hold irrespective of time and place (although formally these only hold for the study population, this may be large) whereas qualitative research locates its findings in specific time-periods or locales.
- Quantitative research has a view of social reality which is static in that it tends to neglect the impact and role of change in social life, and does not adequately explore the linkage between 'causes' and 'effects', i.e. it does not provide adequate information on social processes.
- Quantitative research focuses on a social reality that is external to the subjects whereas qualitative research focuses on a social reality constructed by the actors.

- Quantitative data are 'hard', reliable, rigorous, but are superficial and pseudo-scientific. Qualitative data are 'rich' and deep, but are location-and-researcher-specific and hence of limited generality.

(Heffernan, K., 2010)

3.5 Selected Research Design – Case Study

Bryman, & Bell, proposes that a research design "provides a framework for the collection an analysis of data". (Bryman, A. & Bell, E., 2003, Pg.32) The research design which was deemed most relevant for this empirical study was a case study. This was chosen taking into consideration the different limitations of this research which are outlined in 3.10 of this chapter. The case study approach provides the best method to analyse the HR practices in the medical device firm chosen. This will enable the researcher to achieve depth over breadth. This allows the researcher to gain the opinions of the HR executive along with the opinions of the employees regarding the HRM practices within this company.

As the case study approach incorporates multiple methods of data collection and evaluation it ensures reliability and validity. A case study approach helps alleviate the danger and biases of single method studies. As suggested by Newell & Scarborough, a case study approach appears to be the most effective channel for highlighting the fundamental difference between developing a HR policy and putting it into practice. (Newell, H. & Scarborough, H., 2002) The most recent research conducted by Hoban 2008 and Harvey 2001 regarding HRM practices in the west of Ireland didn't include an analysis of the firm involved in this case study. It is hoped that this empirical study will add to the investigations conducted by Hoban and Harvey. However this study wouldn't be as comprehensive as either of the analysis carried out by Hoban and Harvey.

Echoing the approach of Harvey and Hoban the research zoned in on six areas which coincided with the stated objectives. These included:

- Section One: Background information about the firm and its products
- Section Two: Information regarding the plant
- Section Three: Recruitment and Retention
- Section Four: Training and Development
- Section Five: Payment System
- Section Six: HR Function of the Firm

Case studies can be single or multiple depending on the number of subjects in the case or the amount of organisations used in the research. (Yin, R., 1984) A single case study of a single firm was chosen for this research. A single case study permitted the author to explore the HR practices in this medical device company profoundly.

3.6 Research Tools

The two key research tools employed for the primary element of this research were questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. These tools were used as part of the data collection methods.

3.6.1 Semi-structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews are one of a phenomenological approach where the questions have not been pre-determined. An outline is created by the interviewer called an interview guide which forms the basics for the interview. This ensures that the interview will run efficiently. In this type of an interview the order of the questions can change and new questions may occur. Topics are chosen in correlation with the research question. This form of interview obtains extra data and usually contains open-ended questions to explore answers to a higher degree.

(Collis, J. & Hussey, R., 2003, Pg168)

Before listing the questions for the questionnaire the aims and the objective should be sited and the questions then drawn from this. It is key that the questions are defined precisely before data collection. The questions have to be clear and easy to understand. The layout of questionnaire must take a logical sequence with a proficient layout.

For this research questionnaires were distributed to the subordinates of the HR manager. This was to gain employees perceptions and attitudes of the HRM practices in their workplace. This was a planned twofold approach; to obtain opinions of management and then on the other side of the coin to acquire the attitudes of employees.

Most of the questions used in this questionnaire were taken or driven from Dr Noel Harvey. (Harvey, N., 2001) To evaluate certain aspects of the HRM practices close-ended questions were utilised which included pre-coded response choices. One negative aspect of using pre-coded response choices was that respondents may have been constrain to chosen one which may not have completely portrayed their views. A positivistic and phenomenological approach was employed as part of this research as open-end questions were also contained in this questionnaire. Questionnaires can only acquire a certain amount of specific data regarding the HR policies. This is the rationale for semi-structured interviews being exploited as part of this research also.

3.7 Data Gathering Phases

To assist the author in collecting the primary research a timetable was devised. The timetable illustrates the different phases of the accumulating of the primary data. The timetable is as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	Jul	Aug	Sept
1. Prepare Questionnaires					▓	▓			
2. Distribute Questionnaires						▓	▓		
3. Interview					▓				
4. Analyse the Findings						▓			
5. Discussion of the Research Findings						▓	▓		

1. **Preparation of Questionnaires:** The commencement of the primary research will occur in May when the preparation of the questionnaires will occur. As this is a complex process ample time has to be designated to this activity.

2. **Distribute Questionnaires:** The researcher will distribute numerous questionnaires face to face to the employees in the case study firm at the beginning of June until mid July.

3. **Interview:** An interview will be conducted in May with the HR manager in the company which is being analysed.

4. **Analyse the Findings:** This will entail formatting the responses from both the interview and the questionnaires. The findings will be displayed using different forms of charts.

5. **Discussion of the Research Findings:** Once the information gathered if formatted it will be evaluated and conclusions plus views will be drawn from these findings. The findings will be compared with the literature which has been assessed in the literature review.

The above timetable is an outline and the deadlines may change once the compilation of the primary data commences.

3.8 Sampling

"A sample is a finite part of a statistical population whose properties are studied to gain information about the whole (population)". (Fridah, M.) It is the number of respondents which are chosen from the larger population. As it is not physical possible to interview the whole population a sample is selected to give the overall determination of the population's attitudes or viewpoint. Sampling enables quicker results and is easier to manage regarding data analysis and time. A sample must be as good of a representative as possible so the findings generated can have certain degree of confidence. For this research the HR manager's subordinates opinions' regarding the HR policies within the workplace is to be acquired. The sample size is 40 employees.

3.8.1 Sample Selected

They are different forms of sampling methods that a research can implement. The five key sampling methods are:

- Simple random
- Systematic
- Stratified random
- Cluster
- Multi-stage

For this research a stratified random sampling was exercised for the employees who were interviewed. Stratified random sampling is "a modification of random sampling in which you divide the population into two or more relevant and significant strata based on one or a number of attributes". (Sauders *et al*, 1997, Pg137) The researcher has taken into account different variables and elements of the population to ensure the sample group selected reflects a true representation of the population. The employees were selected from different production lines. Consequently, the population was divided into the various divisions of the production lines and a random sample was then taken. A stratified sample was selected as it is superior to random sampling as it reduces sampling error. (Bryman, A. & Bell, E., 2003)

3.9 Data Analysis

As the author implemented a phenomenological paradigm (understanding human behaviour from the participants own frame of reference), non-quantifying method are the technique's which was chosen to analyse the primary research. These are as follows:

- General analytical procedure
- Cognitive mapping
- Data displays
- Grounded theory
- Quasi-judicial methods

(Collis, J. & Hussey, R., 2003, Pg 261 - 276)

The primary research commenced first with the qualitative research – the interview and then the quantitative research was accomplished.

3.9.1 Interview

Contact was made with the firm via telephone. The HR manager agreed to an interview and scheduled it for the 27th of July. The interview was conducted on site at the firm. However the HR manager requested for the company's name not to be stated in the thesis and also requested that the interview was not digitally recorded. It was explained that everything would be kept confidential. The researcher used shorthand to take notes constantly and the HR manager was very helpful as she gave the author numerous graphs of studies which had already been conducted within the company internally. The HR manager was aware that not using the digital recorder would be more time consuming but this was the method that was preferred.

The interview commenced with a brief discussion regarding the empirical study to stimulate interest. The HR manager was delighted that their company was chosen for such research and was very generous with time and information. The brief discussion which was planned by the writer was an excellent method to stimulate interest in the research project. The HR manager has worked with the company for over fifteen years and was intrigued by the research. The core of the interview was semi-structured. However prior to the interview, the writer had complied a list of questions to be answered. The script consisted of the specific issues that were to be addressed

during the interview. Copies of the interview schedule used for this study are displayed in Appendix A. The interview lasted exactly one hour and twenty five minutes.

The shorthand notes were directly typed below the questions asked in the interview and if new questions occured were typed directly into the interview scripts. A copy of the interview script with the responses of the HR manager is in Appendix A. Quotes from the HR manager's responses were directly entered into the findings section within quotation marks.

3.9.2 Questionnaires

A questionnaire was drafted after the interview with the HR manager. The motive for this was to inquire regarding new issues that may have come to light during the interview. Once the questionnaire was finalised a copy was sent to two of the author's colleagues for evaluation. This was the pilot copy. A pilot questionnaire has been described as "a trail run on the main survey undertaken to test the questionnaire". (Brannick & Roche, 1997, Pg 34) Minor flaws were identified in the research design and other trivial errors. These were corrected and then administered by the researcher directly to the operators on the floor. This approach contributed considerably to the remarkably high response rate. They are other methods of distributing the questionnaire's which are identified by Collis and Hussey as follows:

- By post
- By telephone
- Face to face
- Group distribution
- Individual distribution and
- Survey Monkey – computer generated questionnaire sent by e-mail

(Collis, J. & Hussey, R., 2003, Pg. 176)

The method of distribution for all the primary research performed for this study was by face to face. The sample size was 40 which consisted of various employees throughout the plant, and the response rate was 100%. This indicates that for this case study the quantitative research has a high level of confidence as the results reflect the opinions of all the operators.

As the questionnaires are a quantitative type of data collection method, the information will be examined using charts and graphs to illustrate the data assembled. Charts and graphs will portray the information accurately and will assist in communicating the data. Also, a brief paragraph explaining the data demonstrated will be provided. All of the non-numerical data will be studied using qualitative analysis methods.

3.10 Ethical Consideration

The research for this project was performed in an ethical manner as the researcher was trusted with various information and data. "Research ethics relates to questions about how we formulate and clarify our research topic, design our research and gain access, collect data, process and store our data, analyse and write up our research findings in a moral and responsible way." (Cooper & Schindler, 2007, Pg178)

Ethics is applicable to those who accumulate the data and those who offer them the data. The confidentiality of respondents is necessary and the researcher should respect the privacy of the data collected and ensure information will not be released outside of this study. In this project the ethical standards were adhered to as the anonymity of respondents was concealed and any other information which would identify the respondents was not documented. It is crucial for the respondents to be honest and truthful in the information they offer whilst also avoiding falsification of the data given. The author has to adhere to the Data Protection Act, 1998, as part of the ethical standards of this project. The author has ensured that the same standards have been met in analysing the secondary data utilised in this study.

There is a certain aspect of bias with respondents answer's in any study. This has to be considered by the researcher. As the author has implemented a triangulation approach it will limited the amount of bias as it "obtains evidence form multiple sources to ensure that a biased view is not being obtained from one informant" (Remenyi *et al*, 1998, Pg 142)

Complete anonymity has been ensured and all information regarding company names has been treated in the strictest confidence.

3.11 Research Limitations

- The high percentage of the research will be collected between January and June. As the author is a full-time student all of this time will not be specifically allocated to gathering research for this project. This will limit the amount of data collected for answering the objectives satisfactorily.

- It is difficult to gain access into a company. Once access is achieved it is complex to arrange a meeting with management as regarding getting enough time to discuss all the issues.

- The questionnaires may not be correctly completed or some individuals may choose not to complete the questionnaire. Employees may envisage this as time consuming and worthless; which will lead to a low response rate and in hand lead to a lower confidence in the research.

- As this project is case study based it doesn't permit the author to allow for generalisation of the medical device sector. As this study implements a case study approach it is only taking "a snapshot" of how the company is at one point in time.

- As the investigator is presently a full-time student finance maybe restricted while carrying out the research. This may limit the amount of questionnaires circulated; the research accessed as payment of all e-journals required may not be feasible and creating the surveys i.e. Survey Monkey may not be a viable option due to finances.

3.12 Summary

This chapter illustrated how the research objectives were achieved. The form of research methods and approaches that were implemented were defined and reasons were given as to why they were suitable for this study. The selected research design which was picked was a case study approach. The primary research was discussed regarding the methods used, when and how it was conducted and then finally the limitations of the research were revealed. A timetable of the data gathering process was initiated to highlight the different stages of the research. The following chapter will outline the findings of the data gathered.

Chapter 4: Findings

4.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to reveal the information that was obtained during the research process. This chapter commences with background information regarding Company X and the development of HR policies within the company.

As previously stated an interview was conducted with the HR manager in this medical device company. The HR manager has worked for this company for over fifteen years and therefore has in-depth knowledge and experience within this field. The interviewee name used; Mary is an entirely fictitious name.

4.2 Company's Profile

Company X is a subsidiary of the leading healthcare company in the world. This company employs 35,000 individuals worldwide, has sales in excess of US$6b and its shares are quoted on the New York stock exchange. Company X is a leader in medical products and has developed leading technologies including intravenous solutions, artificial kidneys, continuos ambulatory peritoneal dialysis and blood substitutes. Company X is currently the market leader in Health Care with 67-70% of the market share. They have fifty different production sites with the main production sites in Italy, Spain, Germany, France and Castlebar, Ireland.

Company X established its Ireland Manufacturing Operation in 1972 and currently employs thirteen hundred people at two state of the art manufacturing plants at Castlebar and Swinford, Co. Mayo. This manufacturing plant was involved in one acquisition throughout the years when it acquired the American medical device company "Travenol" The Castlebar is considerably larger than the Swinford plant. They are one thousand one hundred and fifty employees in the Castlebar plant and the other one hundred and fifty are employed in the Swinford factory. The Castlebar plant produces a range of medical solutions for continuous ambulatory peritoneal dialysis (CAPD) and for drug administration purposes.

Seventy five percent of the products produced in Castlebar are Renal and the other twenty five percent is Medication Delivery. Currently, the Castlebar plant does not have any product range in the Bio Science business unit which is disappointing as this is the future. There was a Bio Science product being tried and tested at Castlebar, but funding was pulled from this project by the vice president of the overall business at the time prior to the product being ready for the market. This was a huge loss for the Castlebar plant. Castlebar primarily supplies the European market. The products are transferred to a central distributor in Belgium where they are then marketed to Europe. As the Castlebar plant does not supply the US market it is not audited by US Food and Drug Administration (FDA)

The Swinford plant produces a range of medical devices including catheters, infusors and renal accessories. Their products are exported to global markets including the US and Japan. The Swinford plant is audited by FDA.

4.3 HRM Policy Development

It was considered compulsory to analyse HRM policy development within the case study company so one could establish what occurred once certain HR policies were developed. Due to company's X long establishment in Ireland there HR policies have evolved and grown over the years. In this firm the HR department is inclined to observe the custom and practice in relation to policy development as well as employee requests and legislation. As the HR manager stated:

"They are various process lead by legislation. On the other hand, we operate within a unionised environment with regular company agreements and sometimes there may be a negotiated policy and as adaptation of a policy may come about as a result of that."

Mary also stated that all of their increases in wages have been inline with the national pay agreements and are implemented once they are given the go ahead from the unions. Company X recognises the trade union, SIPTU (Services, Industrial, Professional and Technical Union). Mary believes that the trade union had and still has an impact on the HR policies that are implemented.

Mary stated that

"if it was non-unionised there would be a harder approach taken"

Mary suggested that there are numerous things Company X would like to implement but are restricted due to the trade union's influence. Anything that has a consequence on the employees is communicated with the union first. She also remarked that

"Company X is one of the few units that is unionised."

4.4 Cost of Operating in Ireland

Labour costs which can accumulate to 40% of the overall operating costs, have increased considerably in recent years. These are not the only costs rising according to Mary

"Cost of operating in Ireland has increased due to increases in all overheads electricity, PRSI, increases in expectations everything really"

Mary referred to individual's expectations not increasing as rapid due to the down turn in the economy. Prior to this change in the economic climate individuals were constantly seeking for raises in their wages. She stated that people were becoming unrealistic as to what pay rises they should be receiving.

It is essential for Company X to try and keep all costs to a minimum to remain competitive. This company is not only encountering competition from their main competitors *"Freseneus"* but also their sister plants in Poland regarding new products and production lines and innovative technologies. Mary stated that

"When Company X commenced operations here costs were significantly lower."

Another subject which Mary proposed as an issue is that strength of the Euro versus the Dollar. At the beginning of this century the Dollar decreased in value significantly. This lead to Ireland not being as attractive for operating in as it had been in previous years. Mary alluded

"The exchange rate affects our profits every month"

Mary referred to the high quality product that was being produced in the reason for Company X to maintain its presence in Castlebar. The standard of product being produced is what is fundamentally keeping this company from moving operations to China or India. She stated that:

"What is keeping company X here is the high quality product being produced by the well trained workforce. In our sector the quality of the product is essential because if the quality of the product is not at a high standard then it would have fatal consequences on our customers."

This sector is highly regulated and controlled which makes it harder for medical device companies to move operations to low cost countries such as China. Customers have a negative image regarding the standard of products being produced in China and are worried that the product may not be prepared to the equivalent standard as in Ireland. Medical device firms will be singly one of the last categories to move operations when costs keep growing in a country due to the certification, regulation and pharmaceutical issues. Company X has a strong presence of operations globally which has enabled them to widely spread their operation costs. A copy of company X's European presence is in Appendices D.

4.5 Recruitment, Selection and Retention

This was one of the first multinational companies to commence operations in Castlebar. Company X has the reputation of being a good employer and has changed the prosperity of the town. The manufacturing plant in Castlebar has grown in size and product range. Mary understood that

"the size of the building is twenty seven thousand square meters and various between being four foot high at the loading bay to ground floor throughout the rest of the plant."

Mary had previously referred to the highly trained workforce being one of the factors which attracted Company X here and has encouraged them to keep operating in Ireland. The researcher then taught it was necessary to enquire in relation to their employees academic achievements.

Mary informed the researcher that

"98% of our workforce has a leaving cert and 95% of our salaried employees have third level qualifications."

Note that only administrative, technical and managerial individuals are on a salaried wage. Mary didn't have the precise percentage of salaried individuals at time of the interview. Their wages would be in the top seventy five percent in the industry and higher in the locality.

There recruiting process consists of advertising internally through emails and via notice boards, they also utilise radio and national newspaper advertisements, company website and a specially designed recruiting system; *"Brasswing."* Once an individual is shortlisted as part of the recruiting and selection process they have to undertake a dexterity test. This highlights the potential employee's skills and whether or not they would be suited to Company X.

At the moment, Mary informed the researcher that Company X has no problems regarding recruiting individual. She stated

"Five years ago we had to go overseas to locations like Poland for skilled individuals with technical proficiencies, but we don't need to look abroad anymore due to the economic climate."

Company X is not recruiting currently but for the previous two years it has incurred no problems with attracting high skilled persons. Company X has no plans to recruit in the coming months either:

"No with the little turnover due to the economic climate I can envisage people being let go. However, these shake ups could benefit and be good for the company"

Mary did state that her one fear regarding retention is that if employees are made redundant that it will scare their co workers and they may start looking for employment else where. When asked in relation to having problems before with retention she replied

"We are lucky as they are no other significant medical device companies in Castlebar, the nearest one would be in Westport or Galway so it's not like Dublin or Cork where individuals may hop between a number of companies."

There has been no recruitment or retention initiates introduced in this firm in the last two years but they do allow employees to opt for job sharing and have a shift for the weekends to suit individuals whom can't work during the week. Not every worker can avail of the job sharing facility; one applies for it; your application is reviewed and then acceptable or it may not be proceeded with. She referred to this being an option more suitable for line operators rather than office or managerial staff. Mary also stated that individuals don't have the option of flexitime or working from their own homes.

"All work conducted has to be on site"

The firm has implemented a reward system; for every 70 days an employee works without missing a day they acquire a day off. To enhance employee commitment Company X gives gifts for individuals whom have a year's perfect attendance. They are two hundred and fifty four employees with ten years plus perfect attendance. These individuals receive significant vouchers for holidays or goods of their choice such as a television.

The company has a broad age range across the organisation. It has recently employed individuals fifty years plus. Company X does not specifically recruit young or individuals of any precise age. Below is a pie chart illustrating the different range of age groups comprised in company X.

Figure 1: Break Down of Employee's Age
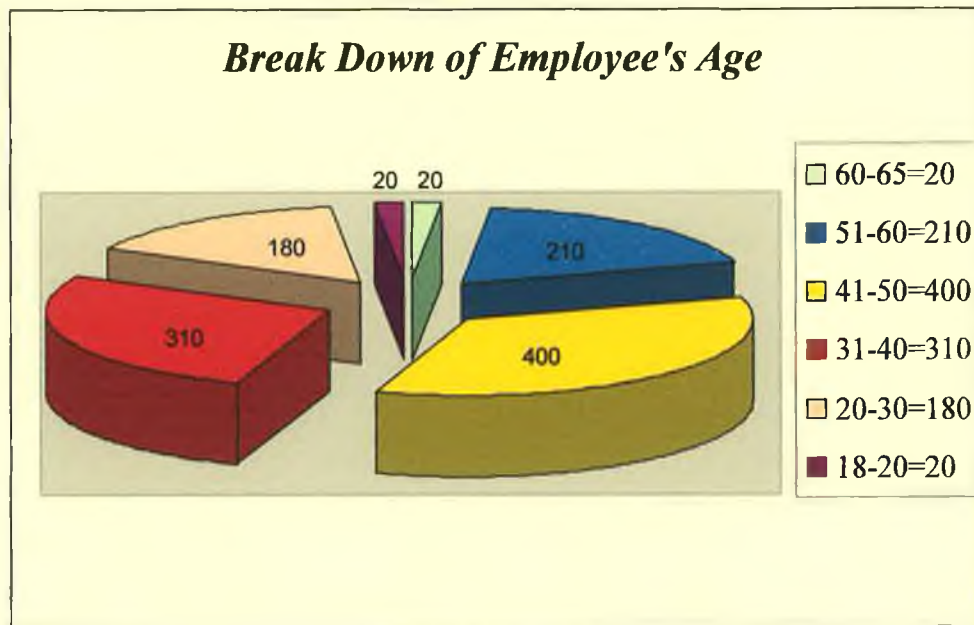
4.6 Diversity of the Workforce

One of the major revolutionises which has been observed within the workforce is the male to female ratio.

"Traditionally company X had a greater number of female employees with an 80/20 divide in favour of females. However, at the moment the gap has lessened with a 60/40 divide in favour of females. The economic climate has brought about this change with the shift from agriculture to services in Ireland as well as the recent decline in the construction sector creating a lack of work for men and forcing them to work in the service sector. The men in our company have adapted really well and wished they had changed careers sooner as they feel work in our company is easier and stable."

The fact that the workers are content and appreciate the work signifies that they would be easier to manage as there would be lower absenteeism and higher commitment to the company. This has been identified by Patterson *et al* "employee commitment and a satisfied workforce are fundamental to enhancing performance." (Patterson *et al*, 1997)

60

A trend which was amongst staff regarding certain departments were predominately male and others female has become abundant. Departments such as the Warehouse and the Boiler Houses which previously would have predominately staffed by males are equally staffed by both genders.

The high percentage of employees in Company X are Irish. This is due to the fact that they aren't high immigration rates in the locality either. Mary alluded to

"Five years ago we recruited technical individuals from Warsaw in Poland now Polish individuals are returning home as their country is thriving."

There has been no issues with immigrate employees concerning different cultures or poor understanding of the English language. Mary purposed that this is due to there screening process, the dexterity tests and employees are made aware of the different rules and policies within the business before commencing working there. They have to undergo training and then sign the handbook to signify they will obey the different policies and procedures which are outline within the handbook.

4.7 Training and Employee Development

The primary driver for training the employees in this business is to maintain their competitive edge. Mary said

"The company recognises the value investing in our employees"

Their training budget is calculated regarding the percentage of sales. This budget varies every year.

"In times of poor performance there still is a training budget but it is not as big. However there are always ongoing personal developments to up skill our employees."

Last year their existing trained employees received on average ten hours training each. However, every autumn training programme's are organised outside working hours for employees to develop skills and help them distress with programmes ranging from yoga to I.T.

There is a tuition reimbursement system which enables employees to accomplish courses with the cost being reimbursed.

"as long as the course was work related, one would not be reimbursed for doing a block laying course."

As part of the businesses training strategy they have incorporated performance management. A manager will identify areas which he/she believes the individual requires more training and the employee will articulate their training and development goals for the year. This is input to a specifically designed software on the departments computer and analysed at the end of the year regarding goals and aims achieved.

There are online training programmes designed for management and operating staff. Each employee is allocated with a username and password. This facilities them in gaining the training programmes which are premeditated for them. These programmes are planned and deliberated by

"external academics and industry experts."

Regarding developing employees company X have also implemented a training ladder structure. This firm has a link with Sligo Institute of Technology which permits Process Technicians know as PT's to engage in extra training. If they complete two years mechanical training they are promoted to MT's (Maintenance Technicians) and if they finish four years inclusive they are promoted from MT's to DT's (Development Technicians). This is fully funded by company X and last year fifteen employees graduated as DT's.

4.8 Future position for HRM within This Company

Company X is a member of IBEC. Mary alleged that the support and advice provided by IBEC is invaluable. Mary would log onto IBEC's website daily and considers IBEC's handbook an essential element in her office. Once new legislation is implemented, Mary reads the key aspects of the legislation via IBEC's website before she attends any conferences or meetings within the company regarding the new legislation.

"IBEC have the wealth of knowledge, experience and information."

The HR department as it stands is lean on the ground with

- Two in payroll
- One fulltime health nurse
- Two fulltime training managers which deal primarily with employee relations
- Two HR operators whom contact the administrative element of the HR department
- Two HR officers
- One overall HR manager – Mary

This is considerably lean considering that this HR department facilities the Castlebar and Swinford manufacturing plants and the two sales offices in Dublin and Belfast. There has been no outsourcing of any component of the HR department and there is no plan for outsourcing in the foreseeable future. Conversely, recently there has been a dilution of authority in the HR department and for any salary increases or shift changes it has to be communicated with the European central office.

Mary believes that twenty years ago the HR department was viewed as an

"Administration department which hired, fired and paid them. Now the employees view it as the department which assists them with their needs and achieving their goals."

Company X has placed a huge focus on HRM and ensures that HR policies are inline with the business goals. Mary believes that the limiting factor for the future of Company X will be cost. It is critical that Company X remains competitive with growing competition not just externally but with its sister's plants in Poland, South Africa and Saudi Arabia.

4.9 Employees Opinions regarding HR Policies

The employee's view of the HR policies within company X constituted a significant part of this research. Academics such as Guest have provided sufficient evidence to suggest that HRM policies do have a significant impact on employees and the organisation. (Guest, D.E., 1997) Therefore employee's attitudes regarding the HR policies within their organisation were considered fundamental in this research.
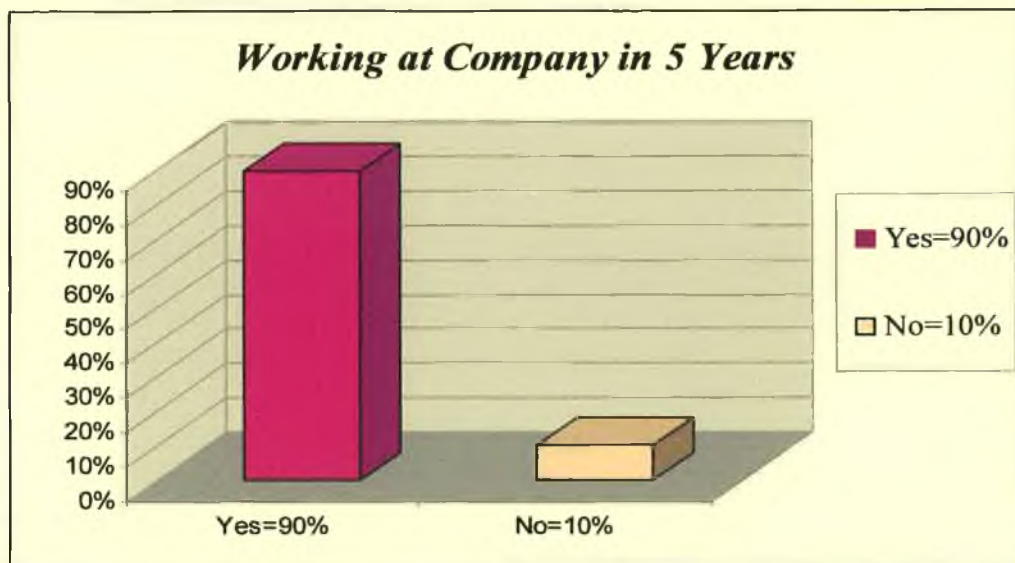
4.10 Employees Commitment to Company X

Figure 2: The period employees have worked with the firm

Employee Service Lenght
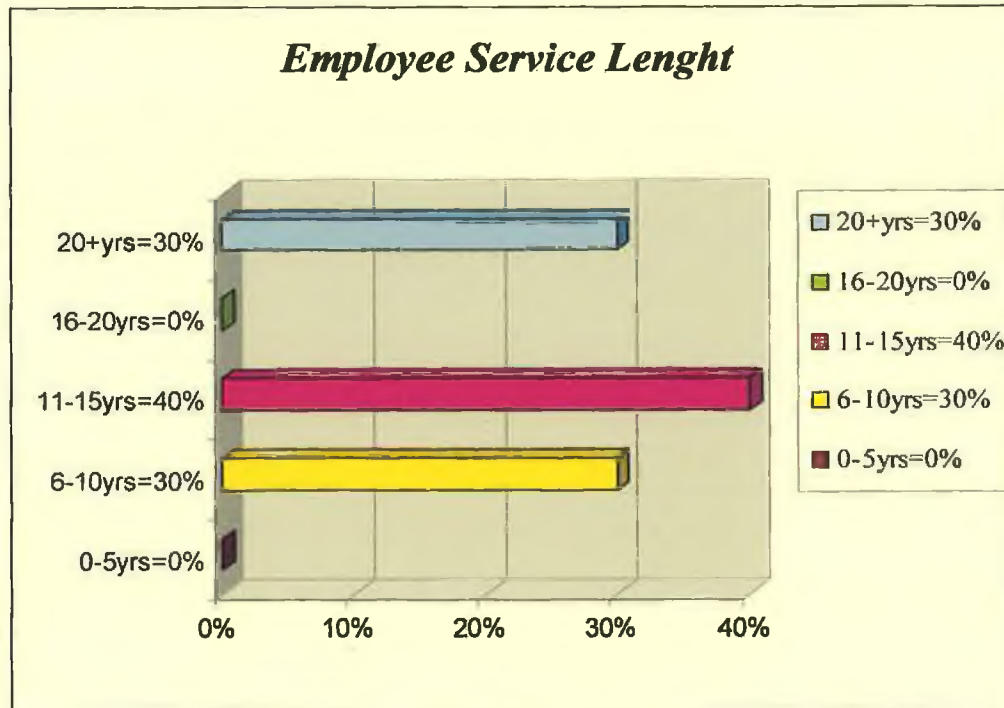
With 30% of the workforce employed with the company for twenty years or over highlights that these employees are committed to this company and are content in their working environment. All of the staff interviewed have worked at the company for at least six years which indicates that the high percentage of staff have not been recruited in the last five years. This zero percent is possibly as a result of the economic climate in Ireland for the previous five years.

Figure 3: Employees whom hope to be still working with the company in 5 years

Working at Company in 5 Years

|	
■ Yes=90%	
□ No=10%	

Yes=90%   No=10%

The employee's commitment to this firm is once again highlighted in the above diagram which illustrates that 90% of the workforce intends to be working for Company X in five years time.

In general job satisfaction and commitment to the organisation appear to be high with 90% of the workforce eager to be still a member of company X in five years and 30% employed with the firm for over twenty years.

4.11 Composition of the Workforce

This section in the questionnaire evaluated the employee's opinion of the workforce.

**Figure 4: Changes in the Composition of the Workforce**
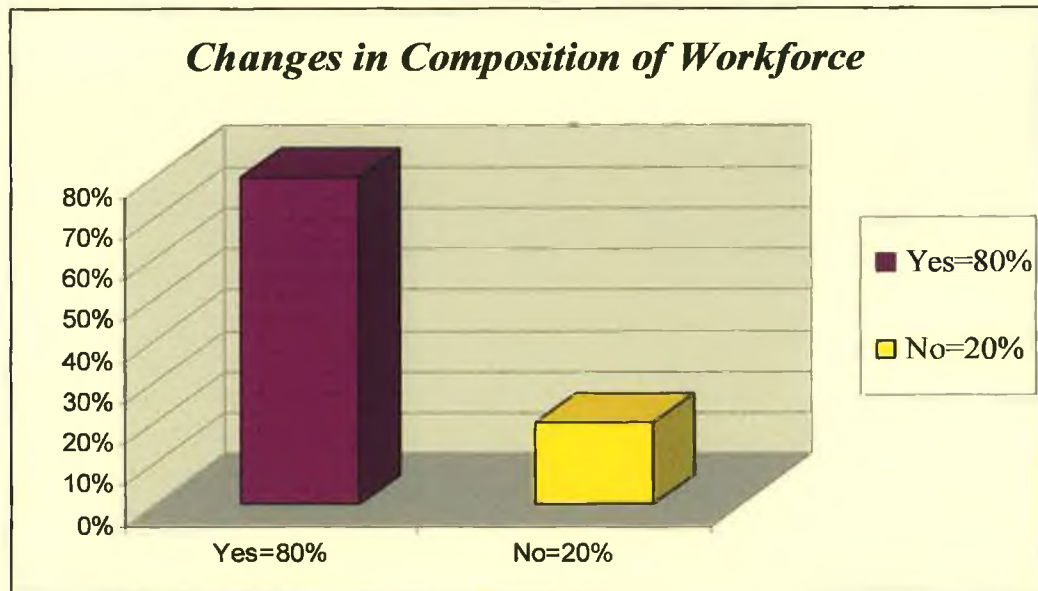
80% of the workers believed that the composition of the overall symphony of staff has changed. These 80% were asked an open answer question concerning how they felt the composition had change was it Irish/Non Irish divide, skill level, etc. All 80% of the respondents stated that it has changed regarding the level of skill which is amongst staff. This demonstrates that the respondents realise the importance in learning new skills and that one has to remain highly skilled within the labour force.

4.12 Employees Knowledge of the Firm and Products.

The author was surprised that 30% of respondents didn't know where their head office was and the other 70% stated *"Somewhere in the US"*. Not one respondent knew that the head office was in Chicago. The researcher was shocked that only 30% of employees knew that company X commenced productions in Castlebar in 1972.

Figure 5: Employee Knowledge of the Company's History

Employee Knowledge of the Company's History

Yes=30%

No=70%
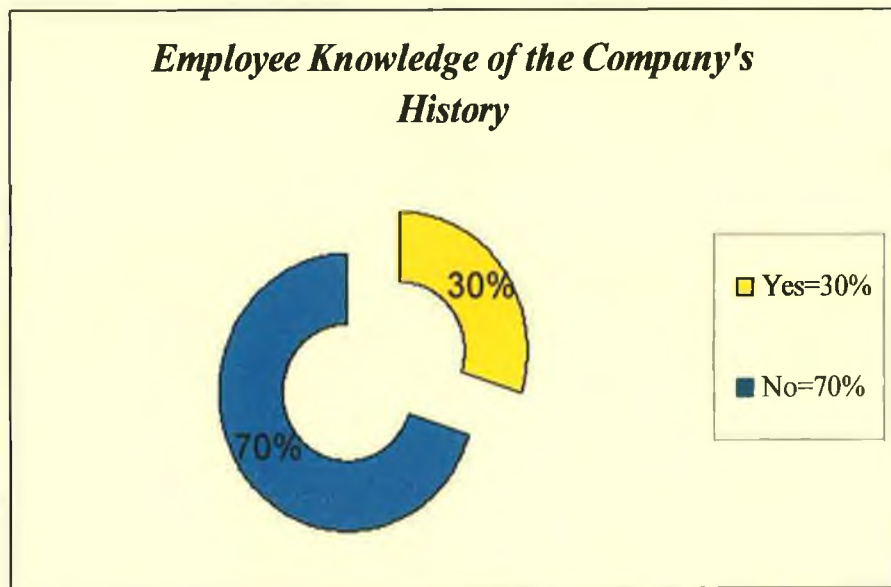
Overall the writer was surprised at the respondents lack of knowledge regarding product's being produced throughout the plant and the company in general.

4.13 Training and Development

This section was utilised to evaluate the level of training the employees had received and their view regarding the training which is provided within company X.

Figure 6: The training obtained by employees in the last year

Received Training in Past Year

Yes=60%

No=40%

Respondents were asked if they had received training in the last year. The results of this were interesting as only 60% of the workers stated that they had received training. This was particularly interesting as the HR manager had stated in her interview that all staff members had received at least ten hours training for the year. These 60% were then asked an open answer regarding how many hours of actual training did they obtain. It varied between one to two hours which is not on par at all with the ten hours which the HR manager believed they were acquiring. Only one respondent stated that they had obtained over eight hours training but this was due to an internal promotion.

When employees were asked were they aware of any tuition reimbursement system; 70% of them said "No".

Figure 7: Awareness of Tuition Reimbursement System
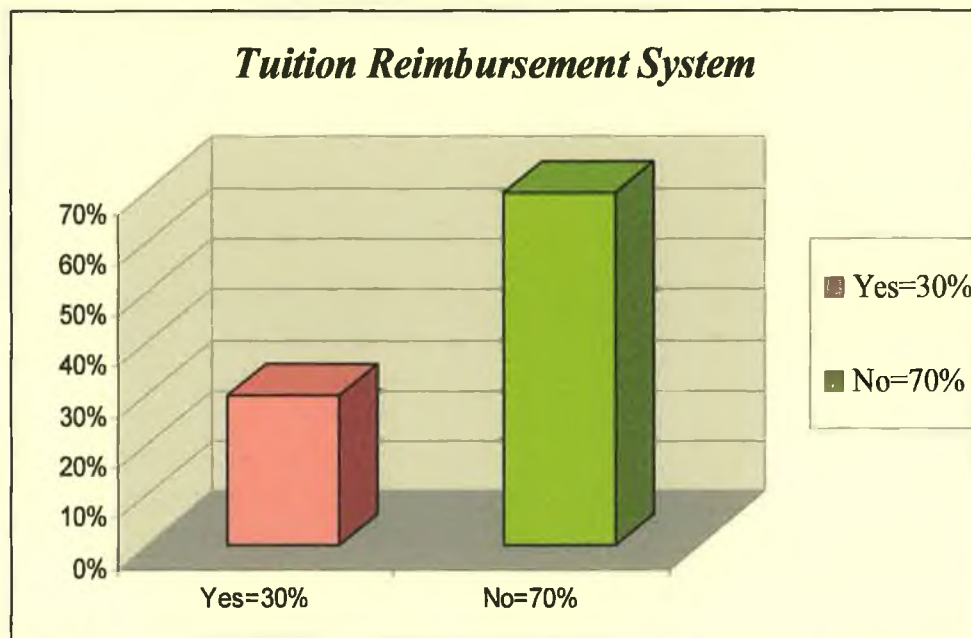
This highlights that these schemes are not being communicated correctly throughout the manufacturing plant if only 30% of the plant are aware that this service is provided. Furthermore, only 20% of the respondents were involved in any training initiative in the past two years. This illustrates that training has not only being minimised in the last year but also in the previous year.

Figure 8: Training Initiative in last two years

Training Initiative in Past 2 Years

20%

80%

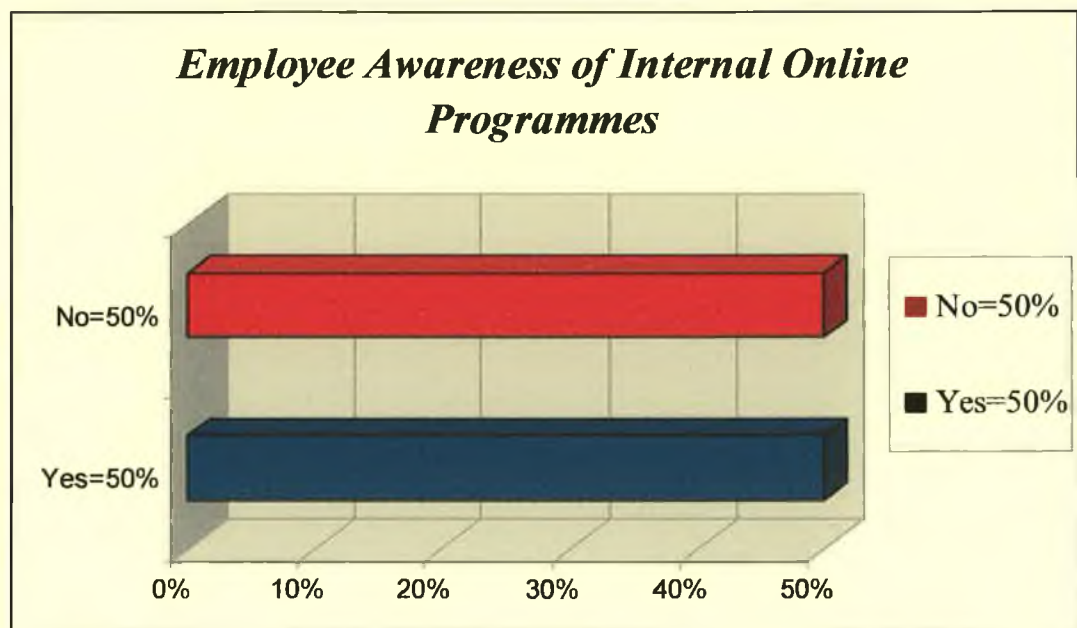☐ Yes=20%

■ No=80%
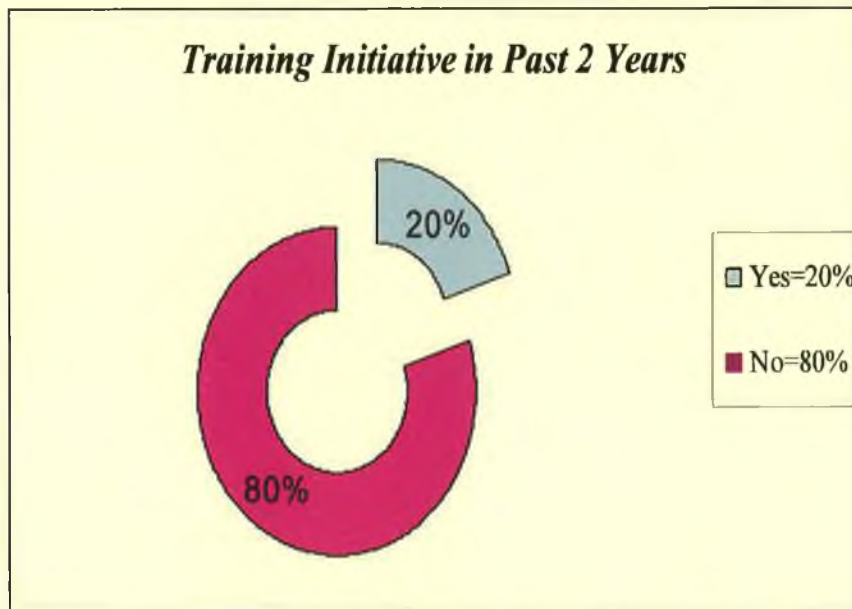
Mary, the HR manager alluded to internal online training programmes which are provided to assist employees with further training. Only half of the respondents were aware that this facility was provided.

Figure 9: Employee Awareness of Internal Online Programmes

Employee Awareness of Internal Online Programmes

No=50%

Yes=50%

■ No=50%

■ Yes=50%

0%   10%   20%   30%   40%   50%

This is not being corresponded correctly either to the employees if only half of the members of staff have knowledge of this service. It is recommended that this be further communicated via notice boards and internal emails.

The author was surprised that more of the respondents had knowledge of the link with company X and Sligo IT than the Internal Online Programmes. 60% of employees were aware of the agreement which company X have with Sligo IT.

Figure 10: Employee Knowledge of Company Link with Sligo I.T
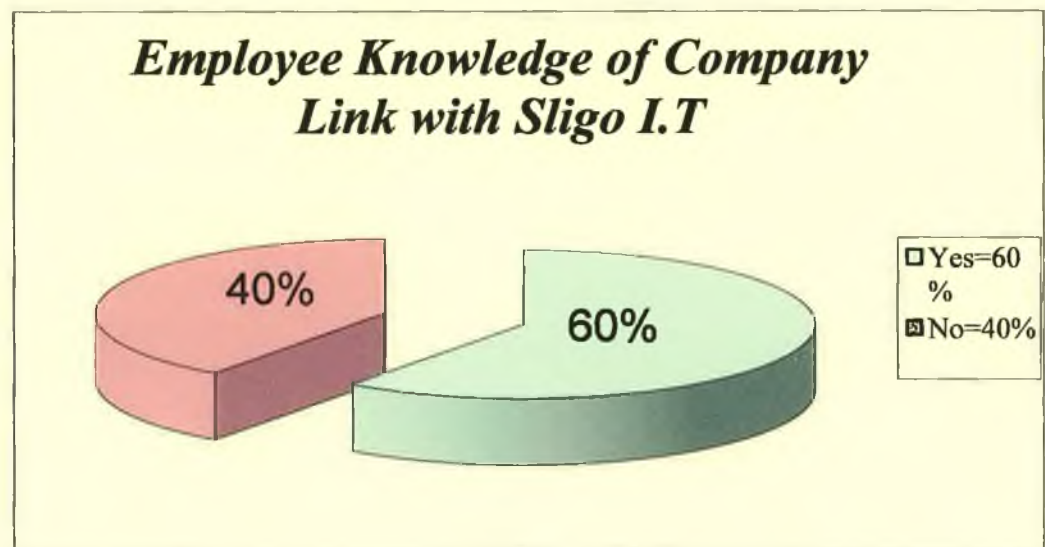
The researcher found the next result astonishing; only 20% of the respondents participate in the training programmes which commence in autumn that are partially funded by company X.

Figure 11: Employee Participation in Training Programmes

Employee Participation in Training Programmes

| | Yes=20% |
| | No=80% |

Yes=20% No=80%
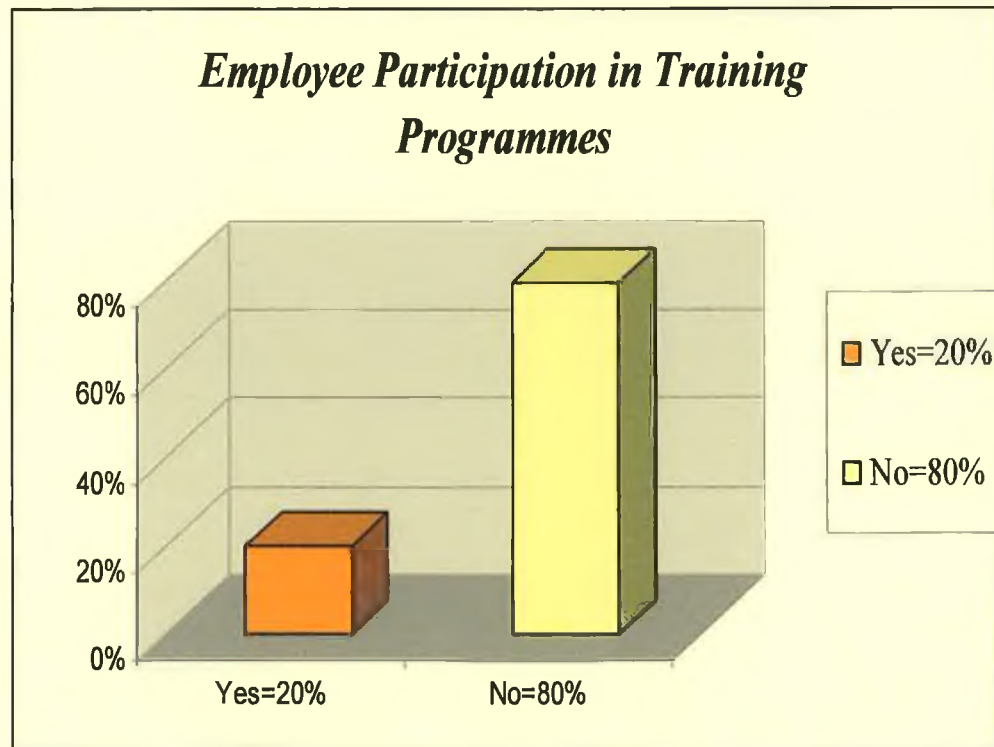
This questioned was followed by an open ended question asking if they replied "No", why? Feedback was received that the courses *"weren't suitable"* or *"too busy for training outside work"*

This feedback was negative and a further comment from predominately operating staff regarding training was that *"it is aimed as people like line managers and supervisors. It is not as available for general operatives."*

The researcher sense's that this has created a negative feeling amongst the general operatives.

Contrasting this negative response was that numerous respondents did state that they were not overworked and that there is a fair system in place. That one does have to reach targets but the average individual would be able to achieve these targets.

4.14 Rewards and Benefits

Extra information given by the respondents stated that their primary motive for working is financial. Others responded saying they do like working at company X but the key rationale for working is financial. Respondents stated that there reward for working with this organisation is their take-home pay. This guided the survey to enquire regarding any increases in their wages as this appears to be their primary motivator.

**Figure 12: Level of Basic Pay Increased**

Only 40% of the respondents acquired a raise in their wages. Further research should be conducted to visualise why 40% of the staff received increases and the other 60% didn't. This is not due to promotions as the question was asked to exclude promotions.

Employees are content with their wages as 70% believe they are on par within the locality and the industry.

Figure 13: Wage Comparison to other Firms

Wage Comparision to other Firms

- Yes=70%
- No=30%
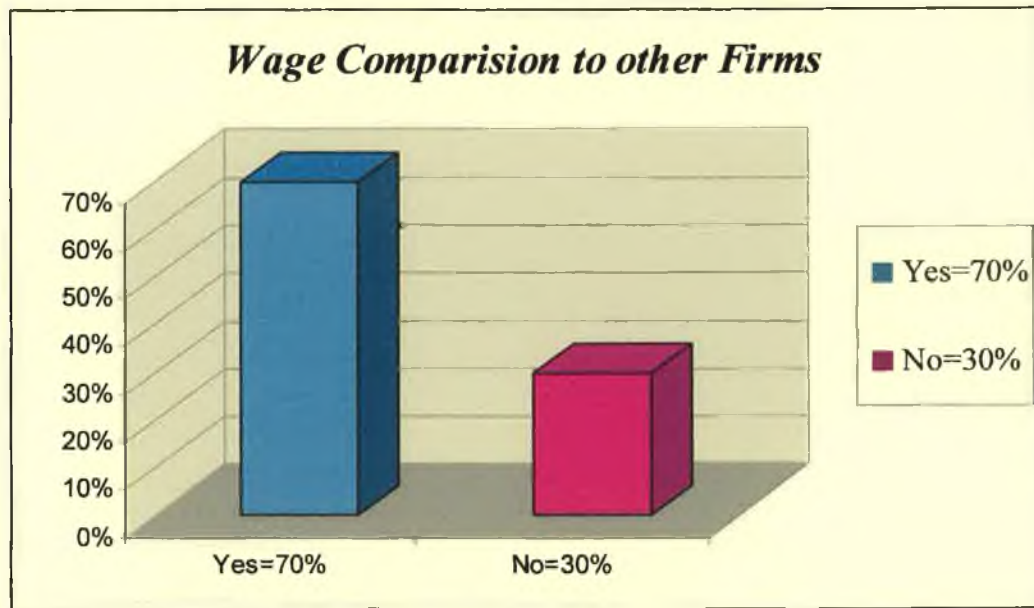
The HR manager alluded to employees undergoing performance appraisals annually. Only 30% of the respondents stated that they have undergone a performance appraisal in the last two years. The author was surprised by this low percentage as the HR manager believes these are conducted annually with every member of staff.

Figure 14: Undergone a Performance Appraisal

Undergone a Performance Appraisal

- No=70%
- Yes=30%
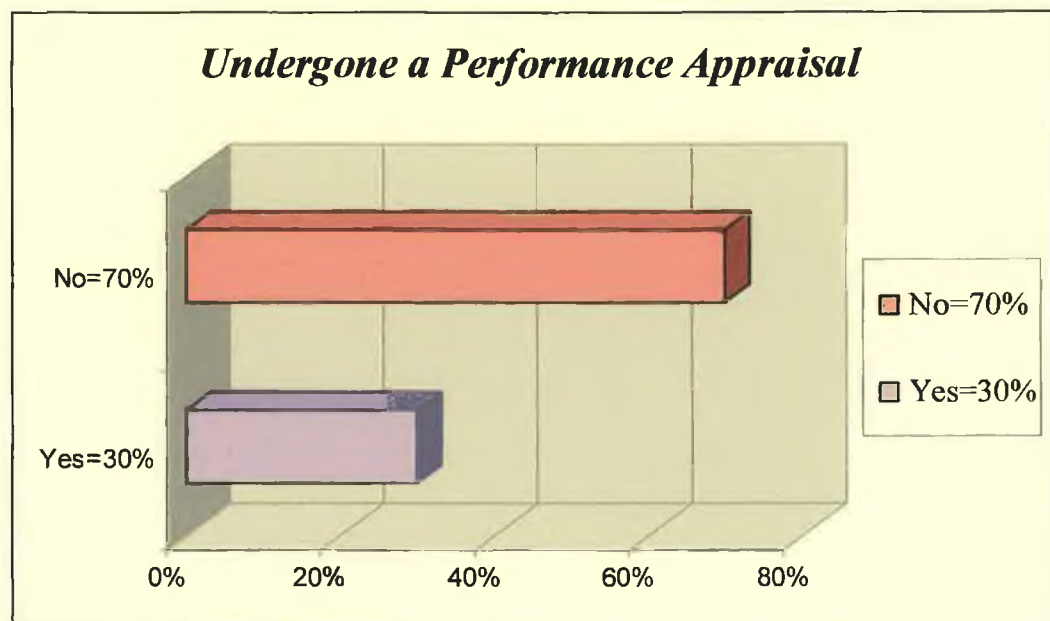
However, it was remarkable to note that although 70% of the respondents had not completed a performance appraisal that 90% of the respondents had received awards for perfect attendance.

Figure 15: The Number of Employees who Received Rewards
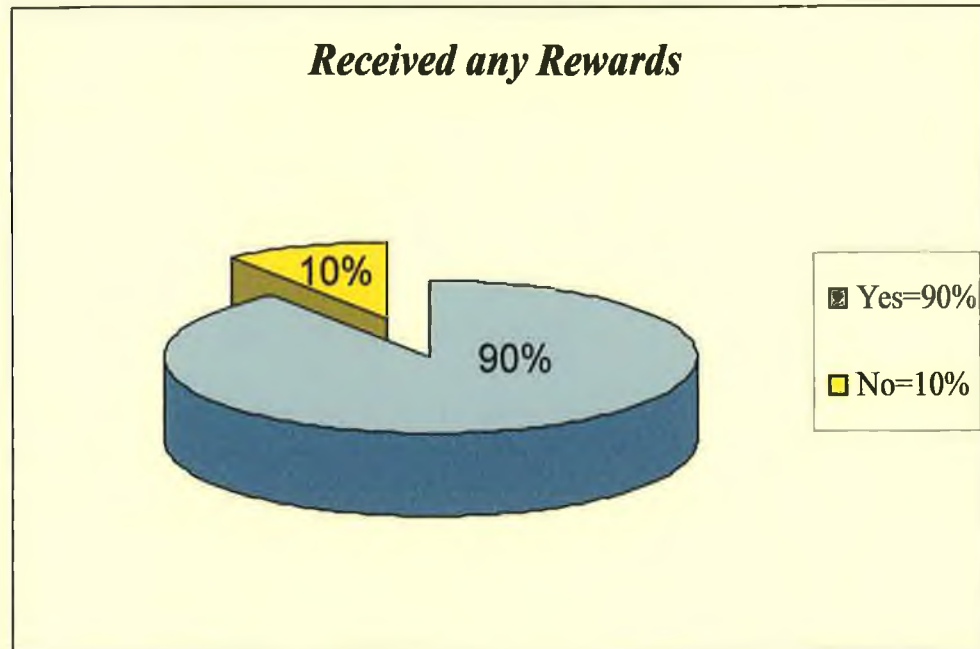
Respondents stated they had achieved these rewards for perfect attendance and service awards. This result reflects a positive result with the findings in relation to employee commitment which was previously analysed.

4.15 HR Department

This section of the survey was employed to abstract the respondent's analysis of the HR department and the services it provides. The first question the sample were asked was "were they a member of a union and if yes which one."

Figure 16: Number of Employee's Members of a Union

Member of a Union

No=20%

Yes=80%

Legend:
☐ No=20%
■ Yes=80%

X-axis: 0%, 20%, 40%, 60%, 80%
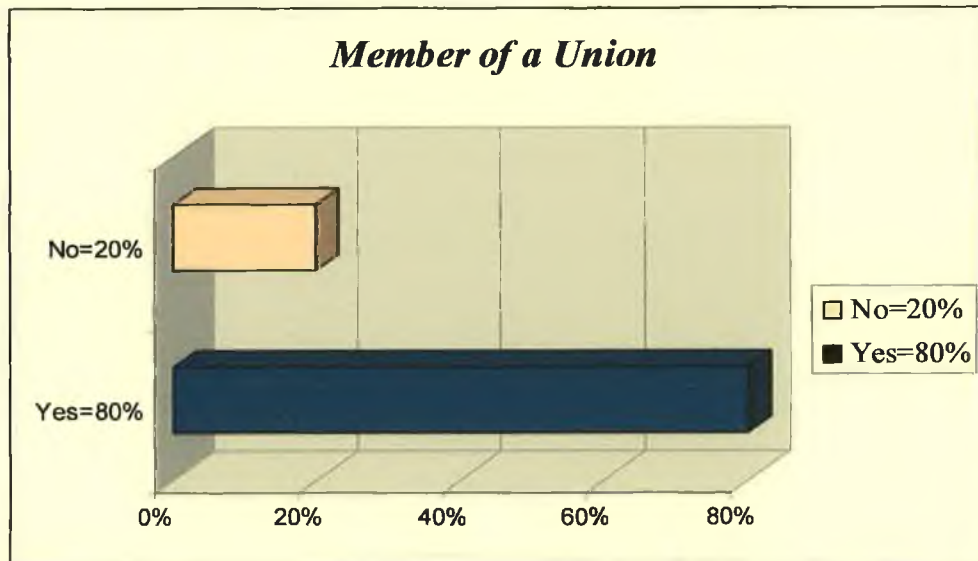
The findings stated that 80% of the labour force are members of a union and the union they are a member of is SIPTU. The researcher then purposed the question "Are you just a member because everyone else is?"

Figure 17: Reason for Union Membership

Member of Union Because of Everyone Else

Y-axis: 0%, 10%, 20%, 30%, 40%, 50%, 60%, 70%, 80%

X-axis: Yes=20%, No=80%

Legend:
☐ Yes=20%
■ No=80%
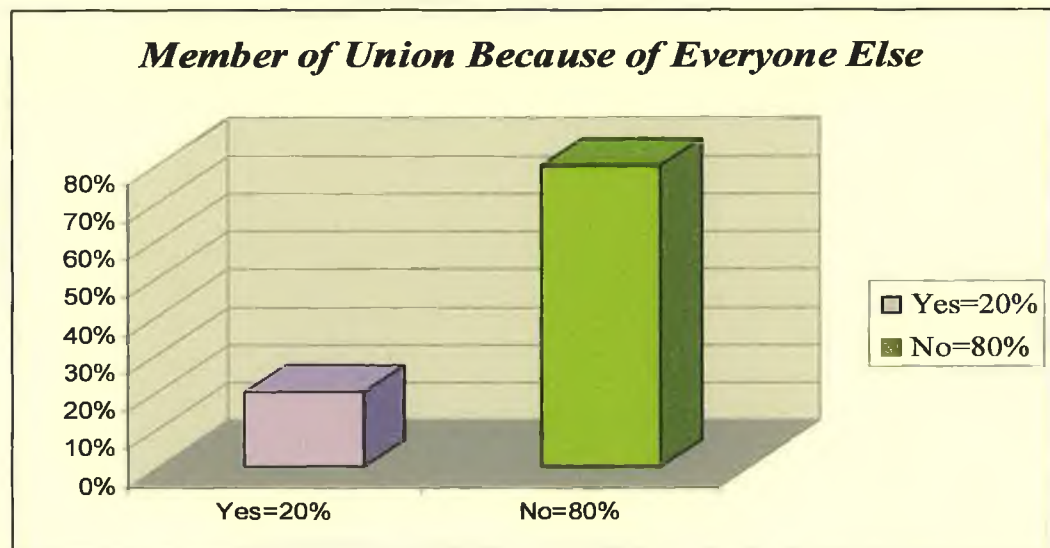
The conclusion for this was that 80% of the employees were members because they stated *"If in trouble the union will represent you"*. Union membership is optional within company X but 80% of the respondents have chosen to be a member.

The rationale for these respondents to be members is representation within the working environment.

Regarding employee's perception of the HR department 50% of respondents view it as *"just another administration department"* while the other 50% associated it with helping them and solving problems that may occur in the manufacturing plant. One 100% of respondents stated that they are not aware of any function of HR being outsourced. This is correct as none of the HR department has been outsourced. However, 90% of employees were unaware of any HR initiatives that had been implemented in the last two years.

Figure 18: Awareness of New HR Initiatives

Aware of any New HR Initiatives

10%
90%

■ Yes=10%
□ No=90%

4.16 Summary

This chapter has outlined the data gathered throughout the research process. It has detailed the different levels of training employees have received, their view of the HR function and procedures and their overall knowledge of the company. The succeeding chapter endeavours to turn this raw data into significant information. This interpretation was fuelled by the research objectives.

Chapter 5: Discussion

5.1 Introduction

The primary aim of this research was to analyse the HR practices within the medical device company. A case study approach was applied. The rationale for this research was to observe whether or not the HR policies implemented in the case study company effected their output and performance. HRM is essential as it incorporates the policies and practices involved in carrying out the "people" or human resource aspects of a management position which are explained in greater detail below. The main benefits of HRM are that it attracts, develops and retains talented skilled employees

The following are different aspects that were analysed.

5.1 Recruitment and Selection

The first stage which is mandatory is determining the nature and calibre of employees necessary for the function vacant. The recruitment selection process selection has to be executed to a high standard to increase the likelihood of making a satisfactory appointment. The implications of poor selection can have an enormous effect on the business as a whole. As this is a complex process numerous medical device companies use specific employee recruitment agencies such as "Life Science".

Patrick Gunnigle and numerous other academics have designed processes to assist organisations with their recruitment, selection and retention procedures. IBEC have outlined the key aspects of recruiting and selecting highly qualified employees whom suit your business environment. The literature regarding this subject is vast and fairly comprehensive.

One of the factors that attracted company X to Castlebar was the highly skilled English speaking labour force. Company X's most common method of recruiting is through their special devised recruiting system "Brasswing", their website and they also promote considerably internally. Company X has previously has advertised post vacancies through utilising advertisements in the newspaper and the radio.

At the moment, company X has no issues regarding recruiting the "best fit" employee for the organisation due to the economic climate. Previous year's company X had to recruit technical employees from Poland this is no longer an issue.

One fear regarding retention that the HR manager whom was interview as part of this research alluded to was that if they are employees made redundant that "the shakeup" may make other workers uneasy and encourage them to commence looking for other forms of employment. Company X has rewards incorporated in its firm such as for every seventy days worked without a holiday day or sick day the employee receives a day in lue. There also are service awards and perfect attendance awards. This is deemed extremely successful with 90% of the staff interviewed having received an award this year.

The corporation has a broad age rate across the organisation. It recently has employed individuals fifty years plus. Company X does not specifically recruit for young or an individual of any precise age. The company currently employs two hundred and thirty employees between the age range of 51 to 65.

5.2 Training and Development

Training varies from basic on-the-job instruction to educational and training courses presented by providers outside the organisation. Training is united with development, as organisations plan the progression of key employees through the company, thus integrating the needs of the organisation with the career development of the individual. The literature states that once hired into the company, simply retaining employees in not enough; training has to be provided continuously to keep the skills set of the firms staff up-to-date. In the present poor economic climate, skills minister Kevin Brennan in the UK, said: "Now, more than ever, we need learning and training opportunities in place that empower people to gain the skills and training they need to get on." (Woods, D., 2010) Thus, it will benefit the companies to survive in the present economic climate.

All the literature researched stated that training and re-skilling employees are an essential element for any organisation to gain and maintain a competitive advantage. The researcher found this area of the research particularly interesting as the employees that completed the survey had different opinions to the HR manager regarding the amount of training they had obtained. Company X has strong training initiatives but they are not communicated adequately throughout the firm with only half of the respondents being aware of the online training programme.

Respondents were asked if they had received training in the last year. The results of this were interesting as only 60% of the workers stated that they had received training. This was particularly interesting as the HR manager had stated in her interview that all staff members had received at least ten hours training for the year. Of these 60% they only had obtained between one to two hours training on average. This number is extremely low in comparison to the HR manager's belief that they are gaining at least ten hours. This highlights that training is not been adequately provided to all members of staff at company X. The general conclusion made regarding training from the employees was that it is aimed at individuals whom have managerial roles. The researcher sense's that this has created a negative feeling amongst the general operatives.

Company X does provide partially funded training programmes every autumn. Only 20% of all respondents surveyed participate in the training programmes which commence in autumn. This illustrates the negative throughout the manufacturing plant in relation to training. Company X needs to communicate its training programmes more effectively and change the image portrayed that it's only provided for individuals involved in managerial roles. The findings have also illustrated that training has been minimised in the previous two year's.

5.3 Strategic HRM
Strategic HRM is the general approach to the strategic management of human resources in line with the objectives of the company's future course it desires to obtain. It is focused on longer-term people issues and macro-concerns about structure, quality, culture, values, commitment and matching resources for the correct need in the future. To gain competitive advantage an organisation has to match its human resources correctly with the business strategy.

The author established from the literature reviewed that Strategic HRM has evolved and revolutionised the misconception of HRM. A problem which has been faced by HR managers in the past which Strategic HRM has solved to a certain extent is that line managers may have viewed HR managers as not understanding the real business of the organisation and only serve as a distraction rather than adding value to the bottom line. As a result of this, HRM issues were been pushed aside by the line mangers whom were driven by budgetary concerns and they focused their full attention on production matters. Strategic HRM has changed this misconception and has enabled line mangers to see the benefits of change for the organisation as a whole.

The HRM manager interviewed has stated that it is key to ensure that any new HR policies or procedures which are implemented are inline with the firm's vision and goals. She stated that this is an area which has been dedicated a significant amount of time. She also alluded to this issue growing in importance over the years and that management consider Strategic HRM a fundamental for success and competitive advantage.

5.4 High Work Performance Organisations

High Work Performance Organisations have control and advanced human resource practices which include performance appraisal, pay, promotion, employee training, development and motivation. The author believes that company X is a high work performance organisation as it has specific internal performance appraisal systems implemented. Employees are encouraged to identify their goals for the year and then it is evaluated annually. The high percentages of vacancies are filled through promotions internally within the firm. This promotes staff to work harder and strive to perform to a higher standard in the working environment. The training opportunities provided by company X are vast and are of the highest standard. The employees at company X have the opportunity to educate themselves in Sligo IT, this is a colossal benefit which is unique and is offered in very few work places. The author was astonished at the career progression opportunities available in company X.

5.5 Best practices in HR linked to Firm Performance

HRM has had to reposition itself over its existence, this being most apparent in the need to demonstrate that HRM adds value rather than it being a cost to be reduced. The high-performance paradigm which was stimulated to a degree by Jeffrey Pfeffer is being promoted as "best practice" for employers, also known as the universal approach. It is based on the foundation that the practices associated with it enhance performance levels to a higher standard than those associated with more traditional practices

The writer believes that they are two fundamentals which make it hard to measure the link between HRM practices and firm performance:

- Firstly it is credible to assume the greater the number of HR practices the higher the returns as it's reasonable to state that the lucrative firms can afford more extensive and expensive HRM practices.
- Secondly, it is not known how or why HR policies influence performance.

The author believes if there is a concrete link between HR and organisational performance that the underlying factors will be employee's job commitment and job satisfaction.

The medical device sector typically consists of employees working on a production line. The production line employee normally has minimal discretion and works within a highly structured and closely monitored environment. Even though this is the case in company X; they are high levels of commitment with 30% of their labour force being a member of the company for over twenty years. Furthermore, 90% of the respondents surveyed want to still be working for this company in five years time.

5.6 Evolution of the Workplace

HRM has changed considerably in recent times. This in hand has lead to considerable amounts of changes within the working environment. New practices have come to light such as outsourcing or off shoring the HR department and new demographics in the workplace which have influenced the direction of HRM. The literature evaluated has highlighted the benefits and disadvantages of outsourcing.

The authors has concluded from articles and academic journals analysed that outsourcing can be the best option to control costs and remain competitive.

The case study company utilised for this research has not outsourced any of its HR functions. The reason is due to the fact that they have an extremely lean office that is managed efficiently. As the medical device sector is heavily regulated it proves difficult to outsource any department within this industry.

The literature accessed highlighted another trend in the workplace; that there has been a significant increase in woman entering the working environment. Education is one of the main drivers of change regarding the increase of females in the working world. These changes have caused HR policies to change and to suit the demographics of their workforce. The above demographic trends are forcing companies to experiment with different HR policies such as flexible working arrangements, which enable female employees to accommodate bosses, babies and lifestyles.

This literature has been understood by company X who doesn't provide flexi time but does offer employees to opt job sharing. This has proving popular within company X. This firm also has five shifts which enables individuals whom can't work during the week to work at the weekends. It has available hours for every individual as it operates continuously.

Previously departments which were staffed predominately by male employees for example Boiler House and Warehouse are equally staffed by both genders. This is due to HR initiatives and incentives.

5.7 Future Outlook

The primary area for concern within this sector is cost. Labour and general operating costs were both identified as specific area's of concern by the primary and secondary research conducted. This sector is vital to the prosperity of the Irish economy. A major apprehension the author has is that the European Commission will regulated taxes and have a standard corporate tax rate across Europe. This fear in recent years has weakened due to political pressure from the Irish government.

This sector is heavily regulated but if costs were to keep exceeding medical device companies would relocated. A recent report conducted by the National Competitiveness Council (NCC) and Forfas this year provides evidence that the cost of doing business in Ireland is falling, which in turn is helping to win new Foreign Direct Investment for Ireland and which will enhance exports.

The key characteristic of any medical device company is to remain competitive. As this sector is driven my innovation this is the chief fundamental in these firms business strategy's to ensure they maintain their competitive advantage. To conclude businesses have to realise the importance of HR and continually invest in their people as these individuals are the lifeblood of the organisation.

In conclusion, human resource management has become more important in the business world as it benefits the company by sustaining competitive advantage. HRM can give an organisation a competitive advantage over its rivals considering the prior data stated above. It is vital to match practices with the functions of HRM such as staffing and training to the goals of the organisation as it sets the company apart from another. When practices are used in the right way, the potential impact increases substantially where success can be measured by lower staff turnover, increased productivity and a boost to company profits.

Successfully employing HR practices within the business builds a hard working workforce leading to greater efficiency. Once an organisation has accomplished in recruiting and selecting high calibre staff, the company continues to retain the employees by reward management, motivation and training. Employees continue to produce high performance work which in turn creates greater profits and better reputation for the business. By incorporating Strategic HRM, the company's vision and objectives are achieved by aligning them with the employee's capabilities. There are several success stories where businesses have incorporated effective HR practices and have benefited them to progress in achieving competitive advantage e.g. Microsoft.

Emerging new trends have allowed organisations to employ a wider range of employees with more skills and qualifications. Outsourcing and demographic trends along with other trends such as technology have changed the HRM context for the good and bad. Outsourcing gives a higher quality attainment of employees, and demographics trends such as women becoming more prominent in the business world have produced a gender balance in the workplace.

By treating employees fairly, the business will receive greater work performance which will result in obtaining competitive advantage over their rivals. Effective human resource management practices are now seen as a necessity to have and are a growing requirement to sustain competitive advantage. Investing into the workforce provides great opportunities for the business to compete successfully in a tense competitive environment.

5.8 Recommendations

The author recommends more research to be conducted regarding the employees opinions of the HR practices within their workplace. It is essential to tap into the minds of employees as this exercise will be critical for the firms to survive and grow. The rationale for this recommendation is that employees, managers and HR academics will have different perceptions of the importance of HR practices. It is suggested to conduct further intense research of numerous medical device sector employees as it has been argued that employee's viewpoints has been beneficial in giving a greater insight into the relationship between HR practices and performance. (Guest, D.E, 1999)

It is recommended that further research is conducting regarding "the black box theory". As this theory has stated; inputs (people) are transformed into financial outcomes without much knowledge regarding which HR practices contributed singly to this. This is an area which further research should be carried out.

The author believes after compiling this thesis that HR is constantly evolving and finance has to be assigned to this area to keep employees trained and skilled to a high level. Every businesses necessary and key resource is its employees. The writer recommends further finance is allocated to this sector.

Companies have to remain innovative and continuously evaluate their practices and procedures to maintain a competitive advantage. Without new innovative ideas companies will find it hard to survive especially in the current economic climate. Cost is also a key fundamental regarding the survival of firms. Through proper HR initiatives and policy implementation this can reduce a firms cost as employees will become more efficient and committed to the organisation.

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GMIT
GALWAY-MAYO INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY
INSTITIUID TEICNEOLAIOCHTA NA GAILLIMHE-MAIGH EO

An empirical study of HRM practices in the Medical Technology Sector in the West of Ireland

Researcher: Natasha Loftus

Student No.: G00166042

This research is conducted as part of a Masters in Innovation and Strategy Management. The name of the firm will not be disclosed and all information provided in this study will remain confidential. For further information regarding any issues please contact:

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Summer 2010

Name of the firm: Company X

Name of the person:

Job Title of person: HR executive

Today's date: 26th July 2010

Start time of Interview: 14.00 pm

Finish time of Interview: 15.25 pm

Section One: Background information about the firm and its products

1. When did the company set-up in Ireland?

   Answer: Company X was set up in 1972 in Castlebar and in 1975 in Swinford, County Mayo.

2. What were the key reasons for the company to start its operations here? Tax Incentive or closer to Europe?

   Answer: When Company X commenced operations here costs were significantly lower such as tax breaks, readymade workers, geographical position in Europe and English speaking.

3. Has the company being involved in any mergers?

   Answer: In 1985 an acquisitions occurred where the American company X acquired Travenol in Castlebar.

4. What type of products is produced in this plant?

   Answer: We produce healthcare products, the three key business units are

   - Bio Science
   - Renal: 75 % of products.
   - Medication delivery: 25 % of products.

   The prescription or saline bags we product for renal range up to five litres, while the prescription bags we product for medication delivery are five millimetres.

5. Who are your primary customers? Are they domestic or international?

   Answer: Our primary customers are International. Logistics bring our products from Castlebar to a central distributor in Belgium where it is marketed to Europe. The Logistics for our Swinford plant is the product is distributed to Belgium and these products supply the Japanese and US market. The Castlebar plant is not audited by the F.D.A as they do not supply

the US market however the Swinford plant would be audited by the F.D.A as it supplies the US market.

6. Is this plant your main production plant internationally?

    Answer: There are 50 different production sites. The main production sites are Italy, Spain, Germany, France and Castlebar in Ireland.

7. Who would you view as your main competitors?

Answer: Our main competitor is Freseneus. We are lucky as they are no other significant medical device companies in Castlebar, the nearest one would be in Westport or Galway so it's not like Dublin or Cork where individuals may hop between a number of companies.

8. Is your firm market leaders?

    Answer: Definitely we are market leaders in Health care. We have a market share of 67-70% of the customers.

Section Two: Information regarding the plant

9. When was this plant built?

    Answer: The plant was built specially for Travelon in 1972.

10. Are there plans for expansion?

Answer: At the moment the size of the building is twenty seven thousand square meters and various between being four foot high at the loading bay to ground floor throughout the rest of the plant. We have had major expansions in the production line and we are continuously trying out new products. For example three years ago we were forced to abandon a product from the Bio science area in Castlebar as funding was required to make the product ready for market but the vice president at the time would not fund the project any longer. It's a shame as this Business segment is the way of the future.

11. How many shifts does the plant regularly operate on? One, two or three shift? Has this been constant in recent years?

    Answer: We operate five shifts, weekends nights and days and week days, evenings and nights. There is great demand for our products so our shift work has been constant.

12. How many plants are there in the firm as a whole? *Previously answered*

13. How many of these plants are located abroad?   *Previously answered*

14. Where is your company headquarters located?

    Answer: Our headquarters is in Chicago.

15. Is demand for the product constant?

    Answer: Demand is constant as we provide high quality products that are a necessity and can decide life or death for individuals. What is keeping company X here is the high quality product being produced by the well trained workforce. In our sector the quality of the product is essential because if the quality of the product is not at a high standard then it would have fatal consequences on our customers.

Section Three: Recruitment and Retention

16. Approximately how many people are employed at this plant?
    Answer: There are 1150 employed in the Castlebar plant and 150 employed in the Swinford plant. Of the 1150 employees in the Castlebar plant 50 of these are managerial employees.

17. How many of these are full-time and how many are part-time?

    Answer: 32 of the 1150 employees in the Castlebar plant work part time while the rest work full time.

18. Roughly what is the male/female divide and how has this changed in recent years (for example, are more women now employed in the plant)?

   Answer: Traditionally company X had a greater number of female employees with an 80/20 divide in favour of females. However, at the moment the gap has lessened with a 60/40 divide in favour of females. The economic climate has brought about this change with the shift from agriculture to services in Ireland as well as the recent decline in the construction sector creating a lack of work for men and forcing them to work in the service sector. The men in our company have adapted really well and wished they had changed careers sooner as they feel work in our company is easier and stable

19. Has the composition of the workforce changed much in recent years? I.E skill level or Irish/Non Irish divide

   Answer: Five years ago we recruited overseas in Warsaw Poland for skilled workforce for technical people however now Polish people in Ireland are returning home as their economy is thriving, so it is much harder for us to recruit technical people from Poland as they no longer need to work abroad.

20. In the last three years has the labour force been increased, decreased or remained constant and why?

   Answer: Our labour force constantly increased until this present moment but unfortunately it has reached a stand stead. With the little turnover due to the economic climate I can envisage people being let go. However, these shake ups could benefit and be good for the company

21. What is the average age/seniority of workers in the plant?

    Answer: The average break down is as follows:

    - 60-65 age group: 20 employees

    - 51-60 age group: 210 employees

    - 41-50 age group: 400 employees

    - 31-40 age group: 310 employees

    - 20-30 age group: 180 employees

    - 18-20 age group: 20 employees

22. What percentage of your workers has third level educational qualifications?

    Answer: 98% of our workforce has a Leaving Certificate and 95% of our salaried employees have third level qualifications.

23. Do you plan to recruit workers in the coming months? What category of employees will the company be recruiting?

    Answer: At the moment we have no we have no plans to recruit.

24. Have you had difficulty in recruiting? If so, what sort of difficulty did you experience and for what category of workers were the most problematic in recruiting?

    Answer: There is no difficulty to recruit new employees in any area but at the moment we have no recruitment needs.

25. What method would you use to recruit? Would it be agencies, newspaper advertisements, your website?

    Answer: We use the designed recruiting system Brasswing who can supply us with employees that fit our criteria. We also use the other methods but a high percent of promotions are internal.

26. Do workers have the facility of flexi-time or job-share?

    Answer: We don't have any employees working flexi-time but 32 of our employees work part time, 37 of our employees job-share and 160 of our employees work our 12 hour weekend shifts. Also, all work conducted has to be on site.

27. Can any worker opt for this or are there specific requirements?

    Answer: Flexi time is not an option for our employees but employees on the production line can opt for job sharing which would then be reviewed before being approved. Persons in H.R or other office positions are unable to opt for job-sharing.

28. Do you have any plans to recruit employees in the next year?

    Answer: No with the little turnover due to the economic climate I can see people being let go however these shake ups could benefit and be good for our company.

29. What problems do you expect to encounter in the recruitment and retention in the future? How will you address these problems?

    Answer: As we previously haven't encountered any previous recruitment or retention issues we cannot see this problem occurring in the near future especially with the economic climate. My biggest fear would be individuals who are made redundant may cause other co-workers to become uneasy and commence looking for other methods of employment.

30. Have you introduced any new recruitment and retention initiative in the past two years? If so do you believe it has contributed to the firm's performance?

    Answer: No there has not been any recruitment or retention issues, it's not like in Dublin or Cork where there is numerous medical device companies where individuals can hop between a number of companies.

Section Four: Training and Development

31. What are the primary drivers for training in this firm? (Staff retention, new products, difficulties encountered)

    Answer: It is important for the company that we have the competitive edge therefore we need to keep our employees fully trained. The company recognises the value of investing in our employees.

32. Is there a specific training budget and programme?

    Answer: Our training budget is not a percentage of sales; it depends on how the company is performing. In times of poor performance there still is a training budget but it is not as big. However there are always ongoing personal developments to up skill our employees. Each autumn programmes are set up for employees to develop skill and help them with stress with programmes from yoga to I.T.

33. What kind of training, both on and off the job, was provided in the last year and to what categories of employees?

    Answer: Our employees receive training on the job and cross training.

34. What is the average number of training hours given to a direct employee in the past year?

    Answer: Our existing trained employees would have received at least 10 hours training a year.

35. How long does it take to get an operator up to speed? Is this an issue?

    Answer: It is not an issue at all. We operate a system where the individual must do a dexterity test before we deem them employable for a position in our company. Some areas are more difficult to train in but once employees have pasted the dexterity test we know that they will adjust to a number of areas and will be easy to train. It takes 3-5 days for our employees to training in an area.

36. Is there a tuition reimbursement system for workers who take courses outside the firm? Yes No

Answer: Yes as long as the course is work related, one would not be reimbursed for doing a block laying course.

37. How does the company determine its training strategy? For example, is training linked to performance management?

Answer: Yes it is linked to our performance management. There is an online system where employees sit down with their managers and identify their goals and areas they would like to be up skilled in. At the end of the year employees and their managers analyse this and distinguish if the goals where achieved.

38. What form of training do you pursue for management? (Leadership development activities, team bonding activities, awareness training programme on diversity issues)

Answer: There is online internal training programmes which have been specially designed for management; there are other programmes which have been designed for line managers and different training programmes designed for general operatives. These programmes have been designed by academics and industry experts. Each employee receives a username and password for this facility.

39. What new training initiative do you believe contributed most to firm performance in the last 2 years?

Answer: Company X has a link with the IT in Sligo. This link provides employees with the opportunity to begin a training ladder in a mechanical course. It is an option for team leaders whom would be technically minded. Once these individuals complete two years they are known as MT's and then if they complete the four years they are know at DT's. It is a training conducted in the style of a training ladder.

Section Five: Payment System

40. Are all employees on a salary or are part-time staff on an hourly rate?

Answer: No we have employees on a salary rate as well as full and part time employees on hourly pay rate.

41. Has the payment scheme changed in recent years? Do you have any plans to change it in the future?

    Answer: No our payment scheme has not changed and we have no future plans to change it.

42. How is the level of basic pay determined? (The cost of living, Local industry rates, competitors or other factors such as partnership)

    Answer: It depends on the cost of living, local industry rates, competitors but mainly on an national pay agreement and an increase or decrease in pay must be put through the union first.

43. How do wages compare to the average wage in the locality and in the industry itself?

    Answer: Our wages are in the top 75% industry and are higher in the locality in comparison to the industry average.

44. Have factors such as inflation, house prices, or the labour excess affected pay determination in recent years?

    Answer: No, none of the factors you have mentioned have affected pay.

45. Are any employees in the enterprise receiving performance-related pay?

    Answer: All salaried paid employees are on a performance related pay system which is based primarily on achieving goals which may enhance their income.

46. What output/performance measures are used to determine PRP – individual, group/team, workplace-based, organisation-based, or other?

    Answer: PRP is organisation based and depends on how the company operating, profits and employee efforts.

47. Does the company have a performance appraisal and, if so, how does it operate? What group of employees are affected?

    Answer: Each year every employee outlines their targets, aims and goals for that year. This is the foundation for their performance appraisal.

48. How has the wage bill in this company changed relative to overall costs in recent years?

Answer: The wage bill has increased considerable due to P.R.S.I and Tax.

Cost of operating in Ireland has increased due to increases in all overheads electricity, PRSI, increases in expectations, everything really. Also the exchange rate affects our profits every month.

49. What new payment initiative do you believe contributed most to firm performance in the last two years?

Answer: There has been none introduced in the past two years.

Section Six: HR Function of the Firm

50. Are you a member of IBEC/IMDA? Do you find this useful?

Answer: We are a member of IBEC and we find this very useful as they are a wealth of knowledge, experience and information.

51. Do you recognise any employee union? Do they have a strong influence within the firm?

Answer: Yes SIPTU. They are various process lead by legislation. On the other hand, we operate within a unionised environment with regular company agreements and sometimes there may be a negotiated policy and as adaptation of a policy may come about as a result of that. I believe if we were non-unionised there would be a harder approach taken; company X is one of the few units that are unionised.

52. Do you use HR consultants? If so what for?

Answer: No we do not use HR consultants as we have all the skills necessary in the HR department.

53. Has any part of the HR dept been outsourced?

Answer: No, no part of the HR department has being outsourced however we have a sales office in Belfast.

54. Has this given rise to low morale or commitment issues?

Answer: N/A

55. How many are employed in the P/HR department and how has this changed in recent years?

Answer:

- Two in payroll
- One fulltime health nurse
- Two fulltime training managers which deal primarily with employee relations
- Two HR operators whom contact the administrative element of the HR department
- Two HR officers
- One overall HR manager

56. What do you see as the function of the HR department, and how has this changed in the lifetime of the company?

Answer: Administration department which hired, fired and paid them. Now the employees view it as the department which assists them with their needs and achieving their goals.

57. Who does the P/HR manager report to, internally and/or externally? Is the P/HR manager free to act independently from corporate headquarters?

Answer: Recently there has been a dilution of authority. We have to consult the European central office regarding salary or shift changes.

58. How do you see your firm and the Medical Device Sector developing in Ireland in the future?

   Answer: Slow, although Ireland has the expertise and skill set here. Cost in Ireland is going to be the limiting factor.

59. What are the critical factors which will ensure the sustainability of the sector in Ireland?

   Answer: The critical factors that ensure the sustainability of the medical device sector in Ireland are highly skilled employee's, continue to produce high quality products, committed workforce and commitment from the company.

Appendix B: Copy of Questionnaire

Section 1: Introduction

This section is to determine the respondent's profile.

(Tick the boxes)

Q1. Please select Gender?

- Male ☐
- Female ☐

Q2. What age group do you fall into?

- 18 - 20 ☐
- 21 - 30 ☐
- 31 - 40 ☐
- 41 - 50 ☐
- 51 – 60 ☐
- 61 - 65 ☐

Q3. How far do you live from your workplace?

- 0 – 5 Kilometres ☐
- 5 – 10 Kilometres ☐
- 10 – 15 Kilometres ☐
- 15 + Kilometres ☐

Q4. How long have you worked with this company?

- 0 – 5 years ☐
- 6 – 10 years ☐
- 11 – 15 years ☐
- 16 – 20 years ☐
- 20 + years ☐

Q5. Which shift do you work?

- Day Shift ☐
- Evening Shift ☐
- Night Shift ☐
- W/end Shift ☐

Q6. Are you full-time or part-time?

Full-time ☐   Part-time ☐

Q7. Have you received third level qualifications?

Yes ☐   No ☐

Q8. If yes, in which college or university and what qualification did you obtain?

- Name of Institute _____
- Qualification _____

_____

_____

Note: Please feel free to add any extra information here that you consider necessary for this section.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Section 2: The firm & its products

This section is to get an understanding of your knowledge of the company and its products.

(Tick the boxes)

Q1. Do you know the precise year the company commenced operations in Castlebar?

Yes [ ]   No [ ]

Q2. Would you be aware of all the products being produced in this company?

Yes [ ]   No [ ]

Q3. Is Castlebar the main production plant for this firm?

Yes [ ]   No [ ]

Q4. Where is your company's overall head office?

_____

Q5. Are there many other production plants abroad?

_____

_____

Note: Please feel free to add any extra information here that you consider necessary for this section.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Section 3: Workforce

This section is to get an idea of the overall workforce within the business.

Q.1. Has the composition of the workforce changed in recent years?

Yes [ ]   No [ ]

If yes, please explain why e.g. skill level or Irish/Non Irish divide, etc.:

_____
_____
_____
_____

Q2. Has the labour force increased or decreased in the past 3 years?

Increased ☐   Decreased ☐

Q3. Where did you see your job vacancy at the time?

- Newspaper ☐
- Radio ☐
- Company's website ☐
- Through an agency ☐
- Other (please specify) ☐

_____

Q4. Do you have the option to job share?

Yes ☐   No ☐

Q5. Do you hope to be working at this plant in 5 years time?

Yes ☐   No ☐

Section 4: Training & Development

This section is to determine the training you have received as an employee of this company.

Q1. Have you received training in the past year?

Yes ☐   No ☐

If yes, please explain what training you received, where & how long was it for?

_____
_____
_____

If no, would you have liked to receive training? What would you like to receive training in?

_____
_____
_____

Q2. Has all the training you have received been on the job?

Yes ☐   No ☐

If no, please explain e.g. Seminars.

_____
_____
_____
_____

Q3. How many hours training have you received in the past year?

_____

Q4. Are you aware of any tuition reimbursement system?

Yes ☐   No ☐

Q5. Have you been involved in any new training initiative in the past 2 years?

Yes ☐ No ☐

Q6. Are you aware of any internal online programmes which provide training activities?

Yes ☐ No ☐

Q7. Did you know your company has a link with the Institute of Technology in Sligo to improve its employee's skills?

Yes ☐ No ☐

Q8. Do you participate in any of the training or other programmes which commence in autumn?

Yes ☐ No ☐

If yes, which one and why do you complete this programme?

_____

_____

_____

If no, why not?

_____

_____

_____

Note: Please feel free to add any extra information here that you consider necessary for this section.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Section 5: Payment

This section is to determine the whether or not you are satisfied with the payment you receive.

Q1. Has your level of basic pay increased in the past 2 years (excluding promotions)?

Yes ☐ No ☐

Q2. Do you feel your wages compare on par within the locality and industry?

Yes ☐ No ☐

Q3. Do you receive performance related pay?

Yes ☐ No ☐

Q4. Have you undergone a performance appraisal in the past 2 years?

Yes [ ]   No [ ]

If yes, can you please outline how long this took and what method your supervisor used to complete your performance appraisal?

_____

_____

_____

Q5. Have you received any awards or rewards in your time working with this company?

Yes [ ]   No [ ]

If yes, please explain:

_____

_____

_____

_____

Note: Please feel free to add any extra information here that you consider necessary for this section.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Section 6: HR Department

This section is to determine your understanding of the functions within the HR department.

Q1. Are you a member of a union?

Yes [ ]   No [ ]

If yes, which one?

_____

_____

_____

Q2. Are you just a member of the union because everyone else is?

Yes [ ]   No [ ]

Q3. What benefits do you believe you obtain from being a member?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Q4. Are you aware of any new HR initiatives that have been introduced in the past two years?

Yes [ ]   No [ ]

If yes, which initiatives?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Q5. What is your understanding of the function of the HR? For example do you view it as the department that pays you? Or the department that helps you? Or do you view it as another administration department?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Q6. Are you aware of any part of the HR department that has been outsourced?

Yes [ ]   No [ ]

If yes, which function?

_____

_____

_____

Note: Please feel free to add any extra information here that you consider necessary for this section.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

If you have any extra thoughts on any of the above questions or even any other taught which were prompted by the above questionnaire, please feel free to share your views with the researcher.

Thank you for taking the time in completing this questionnaire.

Section 1: Introduction

Q.1 Please select Gender?
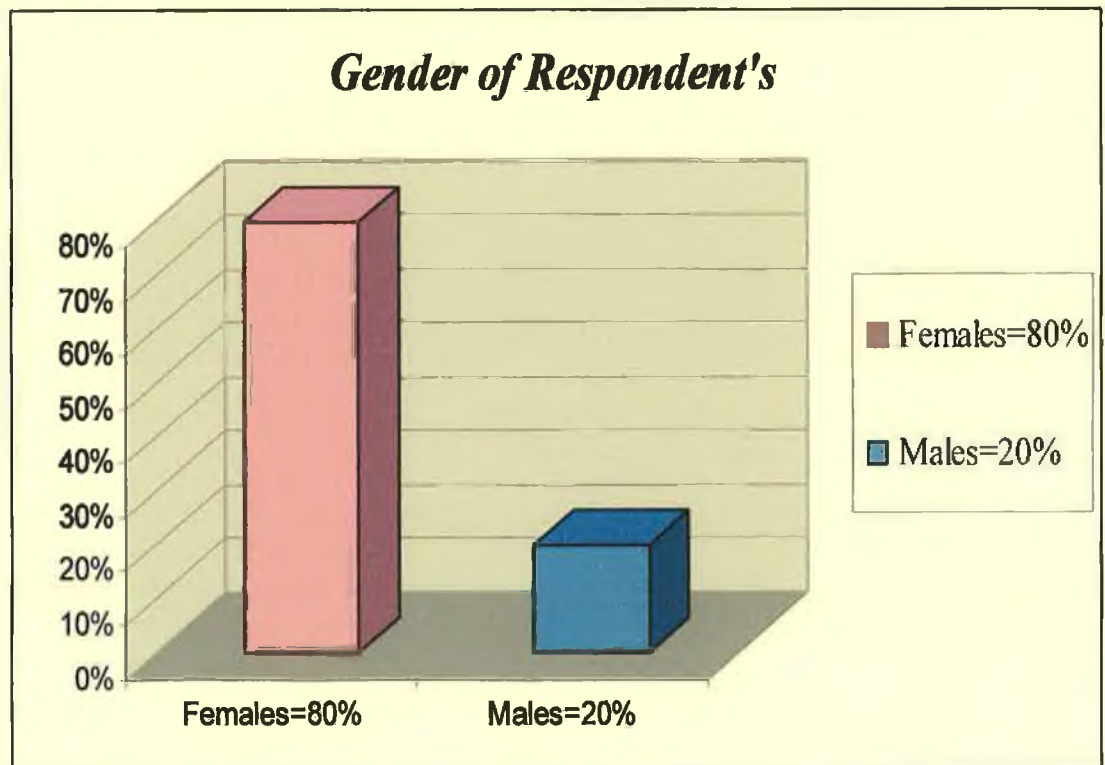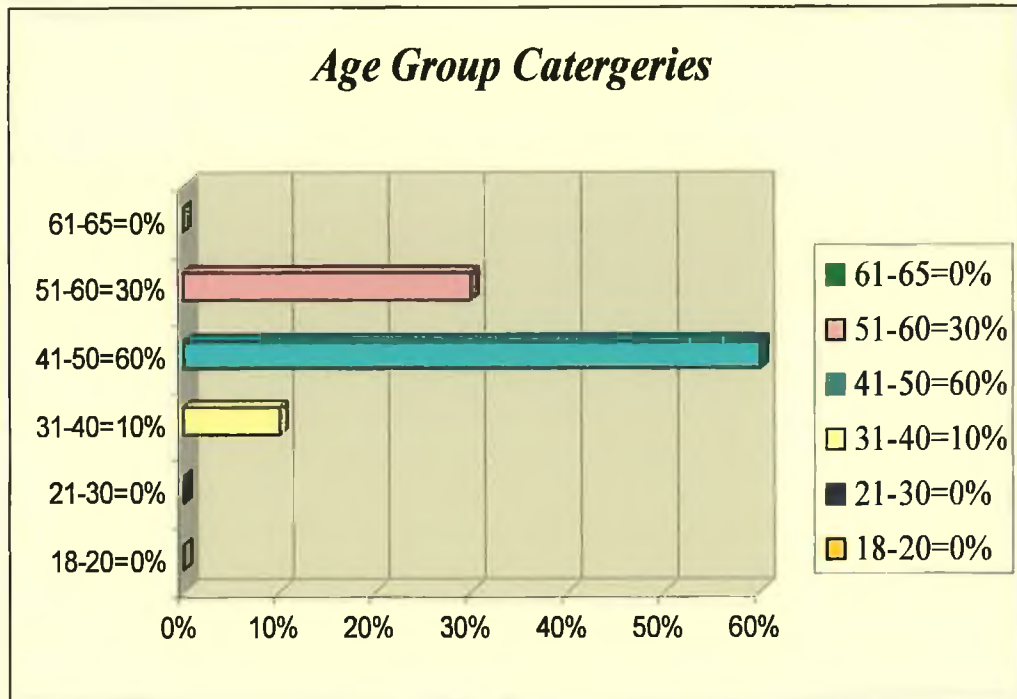
Gender of Respondent's

Females=80%

Males=20%

Q.2 What age group do you fall into?

Age Group Catergeries

Age Group	Percentage
61-65	0%
51-60	30%
41-50	60%
31-40	10%
21-30	0%
18-20	0%

Q.3 How far do you live from your workplace?

Distance from Workplace

Distance	Percentage
0-5km	0%
5-10km	40%
10-15km	40%
15+km	20%

Q.4 How long have you worked with this company?

Employee Service Lenght

Q.5 What shift do you work?

Employees Per Shift

120

Q6 Are you full-time or part time?

Employment Type

20%

80%
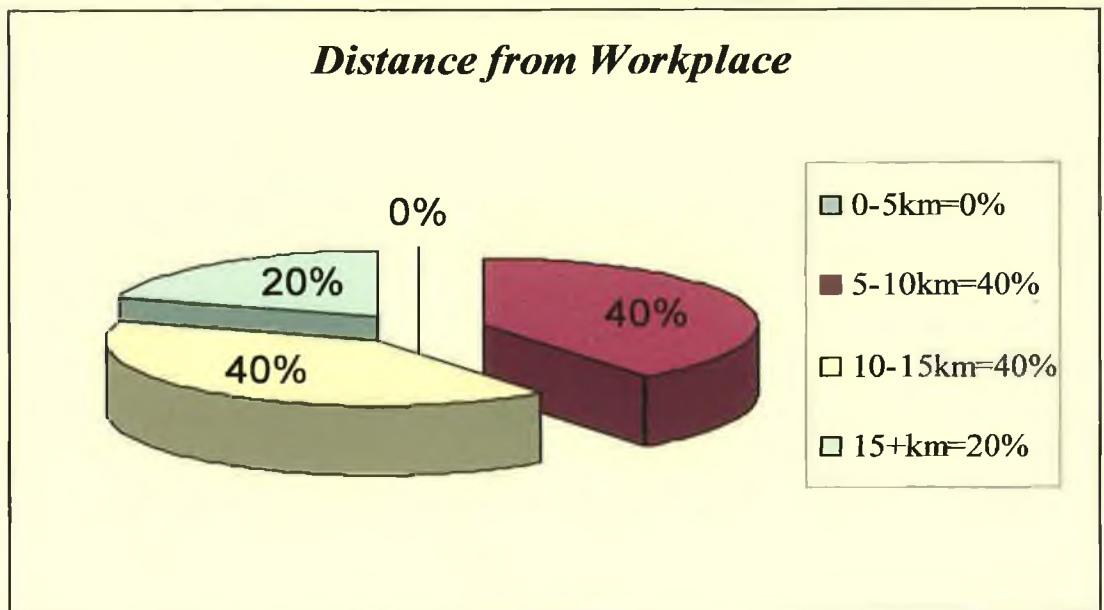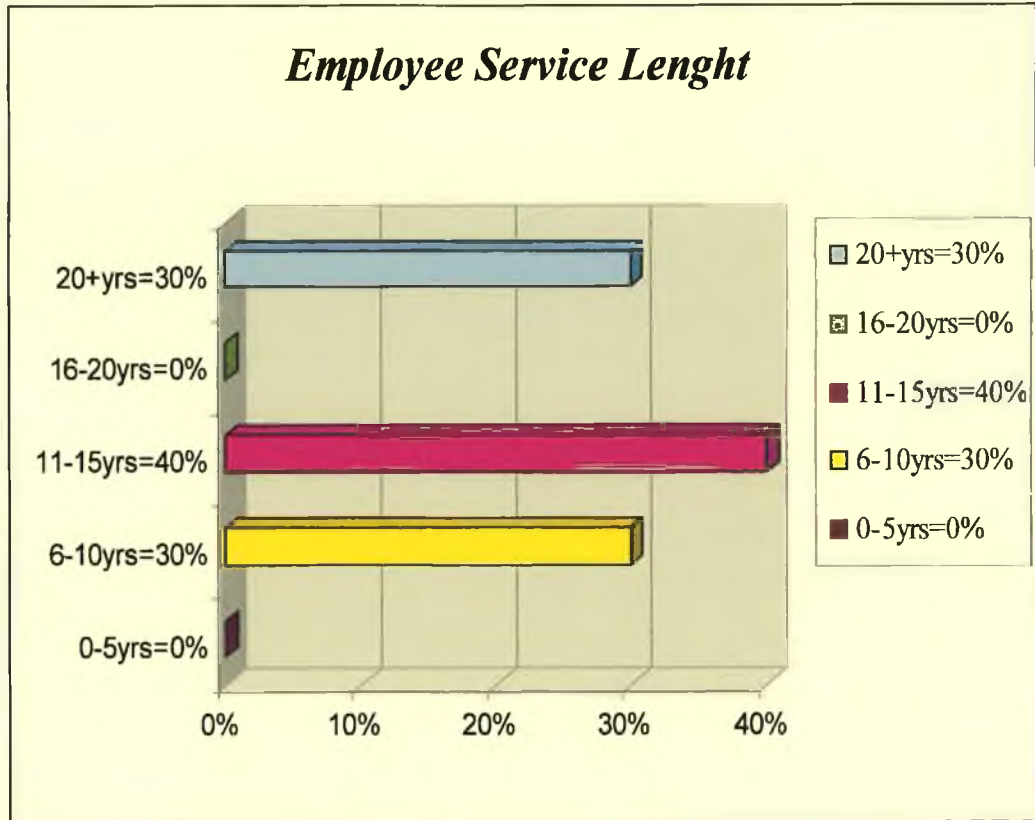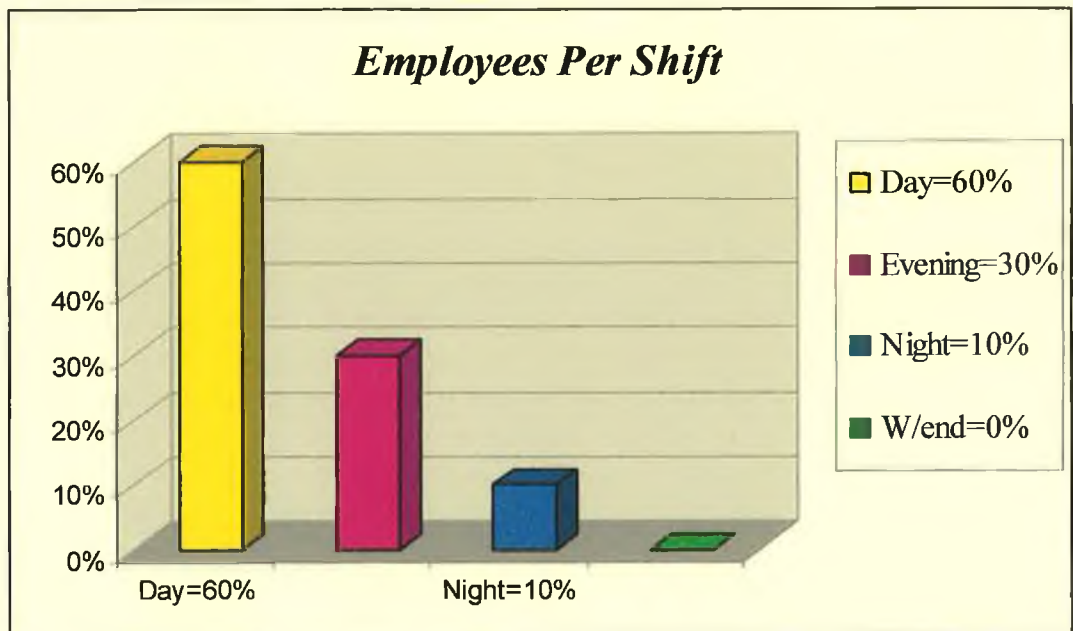
■ Full-time=80%

■ Part-time=20%
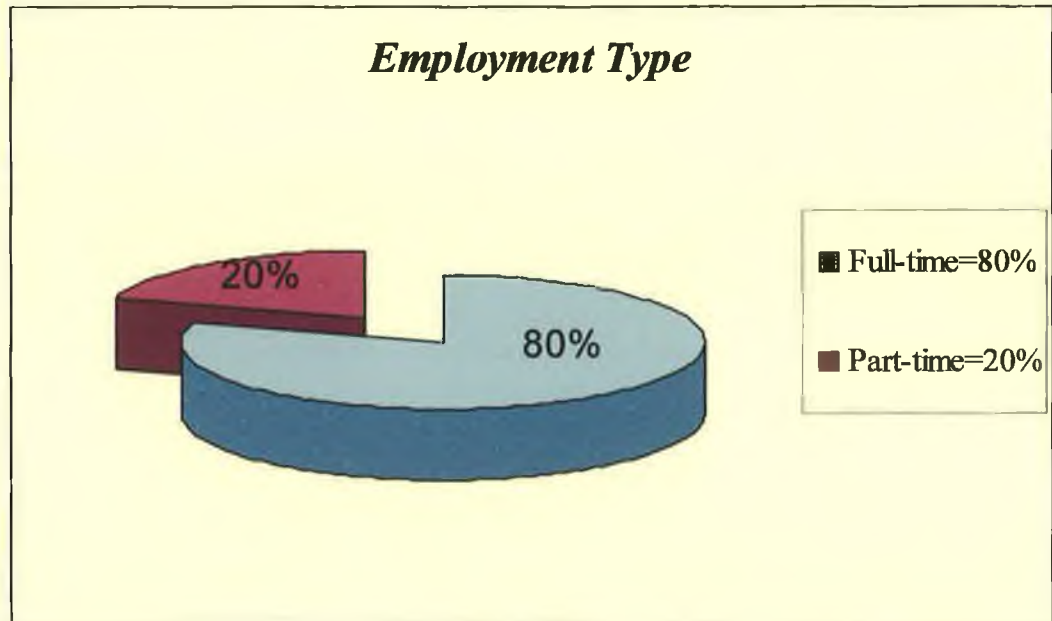
Q.7 Have you received third level education?

All respondent's answered "No" to this question.

Q.8 If yes, in which college or university and what qualification did you obtain?

This question was not relevant as all respondent's answered "No" to the previous question.

Section 2: The Firm and its Products

Q.1 Do you know the precise year the company commenced operations in Castlebar?
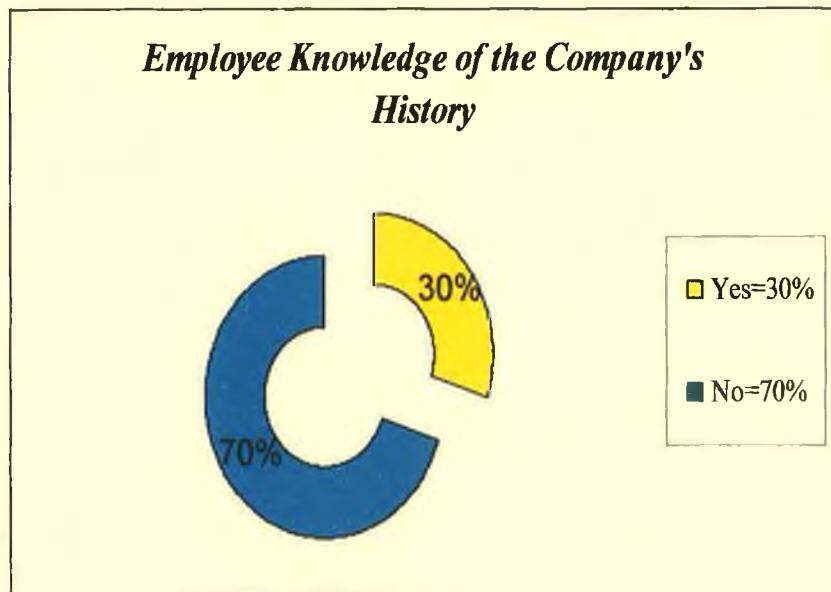
Employee Knowledge of the Company's History

- ☐ Yes=30%
- ■ No=70%

Q.2 Would you be aware of all the products being produced in this company?

Employee Knowledge of Company Products

- ■ Yes=80%
- ■ No=20%

Q.3 Is Castlebar the main production plant for this firm?

Employee Knowledge of Company Status

30%

70%

■ Yes=30%

■ No=70%
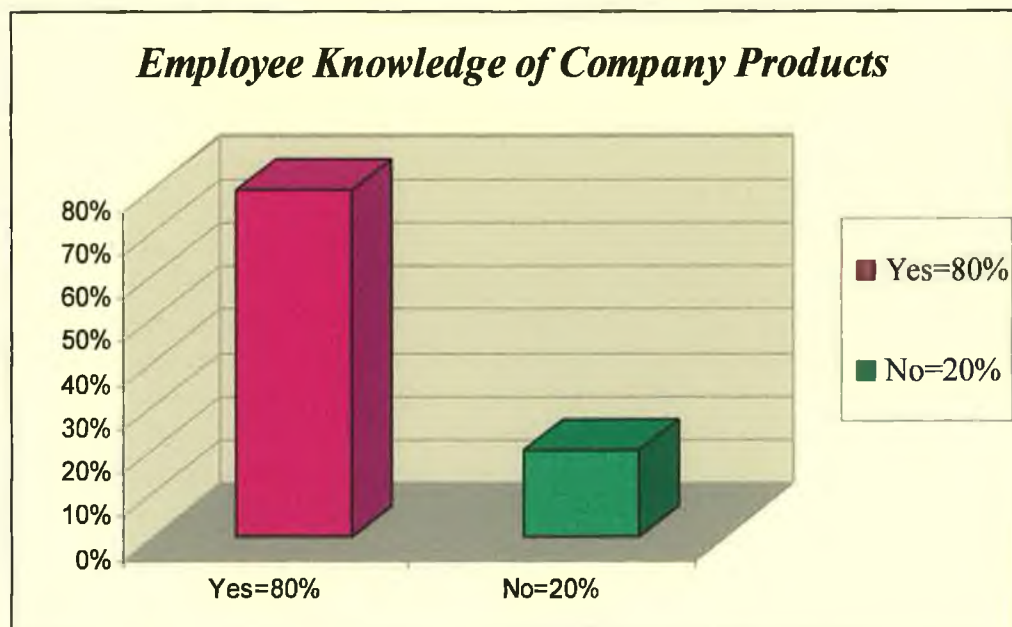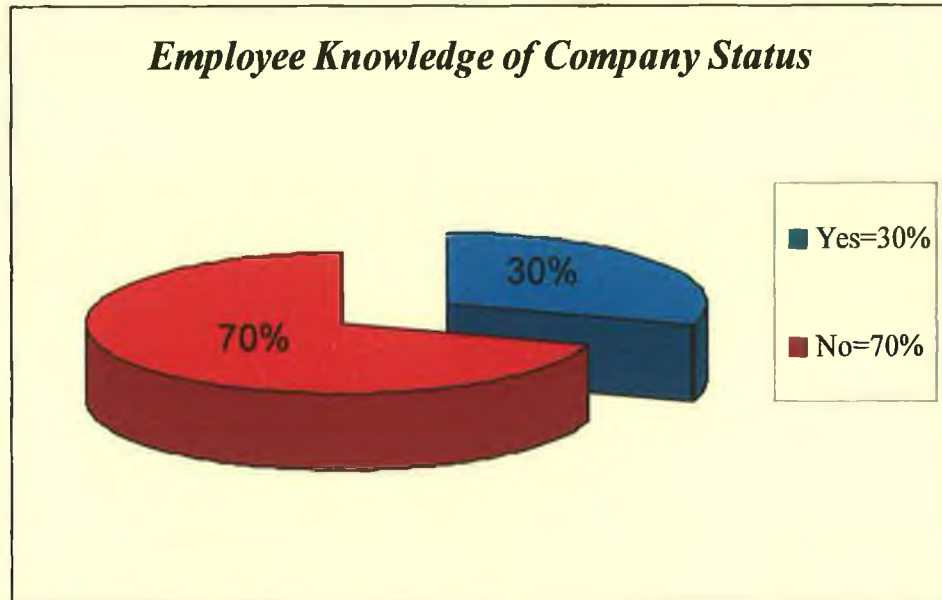
Q.4 Where is your company's overall head office?

None of the employee's where sure where the head office of their company was located. 10% admitted that they where not sure while 80% tuck a random guess saying that the head office was in America. The remaining 10% stated that the head office was in England. As the employees tuck random guesses and where not entirely sure where their head office was located, I was unable to construct a reliable chart.

Q.5 Are there many other production plants abroad?

None of the employee's knew how many production plants there are abroad. 30% of employee's admitted that they did not know while the remain 70% of employee's totally under estimated the number of production plants abroad saying there are five-seven production plants. As this was an open question that employees tuck a random guess at answering, I was unable to construct a relevant chart.

Section 3: Workforce

Q.1.A Has the composition of the workforce changed in recent years?
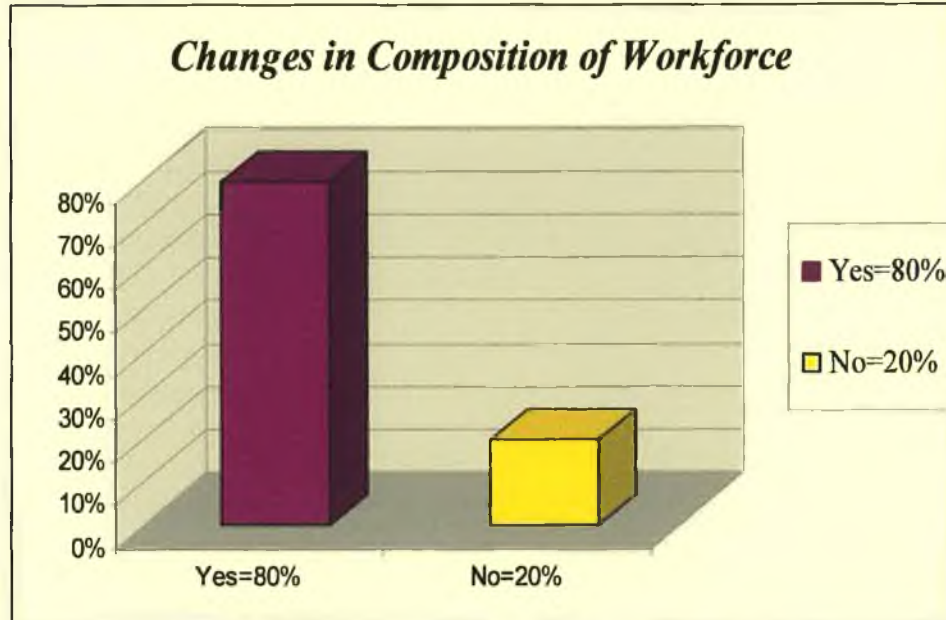
Q1.B.If yes, please explain why e.g. skill level or Irish/Non Irish divide etc.

This was an open ended question so I was unable to construct a chart or diagram as the data varied for one employee to the next.

*Q.2 Has the labour force increased or decreased in the past 3 years?*
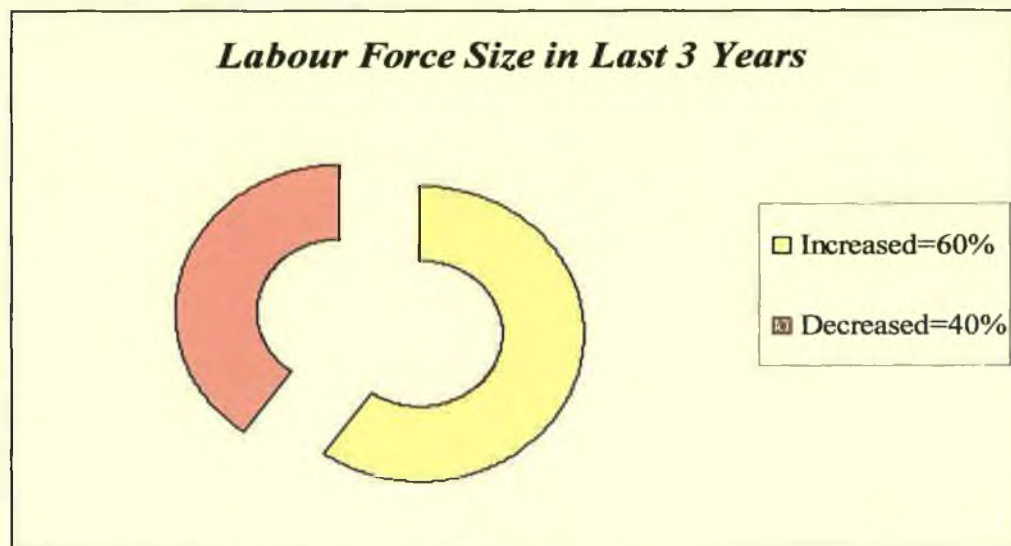
Q.3 Where did you see your job vacancy at the time?

This question found that 50% saw their job vacancy in the newspaper while the other 50% heard about a job vacancy from a family member or friend. I was unable to construct a chart or diagram as there was not enough information to format a chart.

Q.4 Do you have the option to job share?
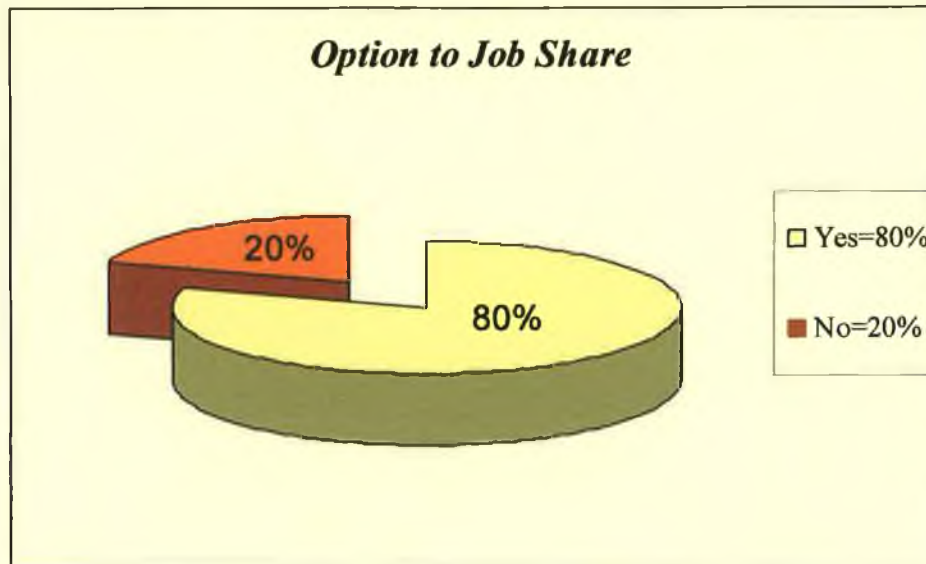
Q.5 Do you hope to be working at this plant in 5 years time?
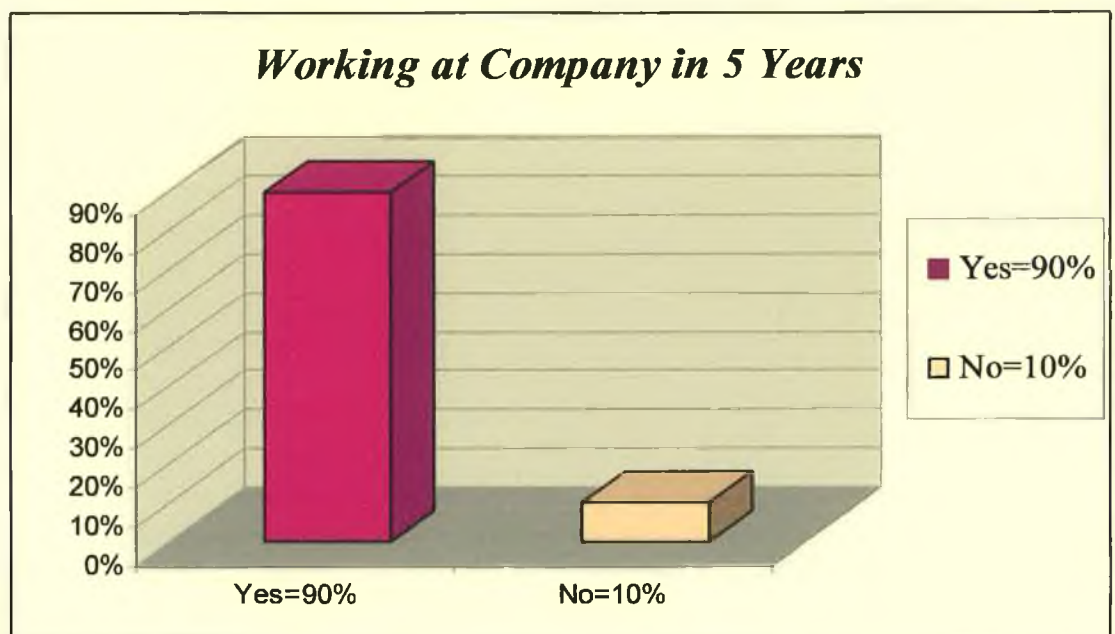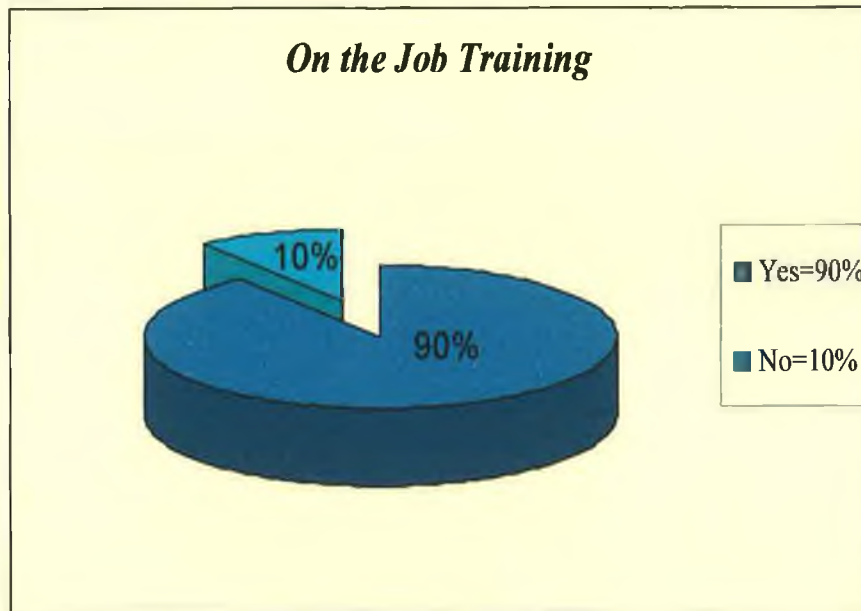
Q.1 Have you received any training in the past year?

Received Training in Past Year

☐ Yes=60%	
■ No=40%	
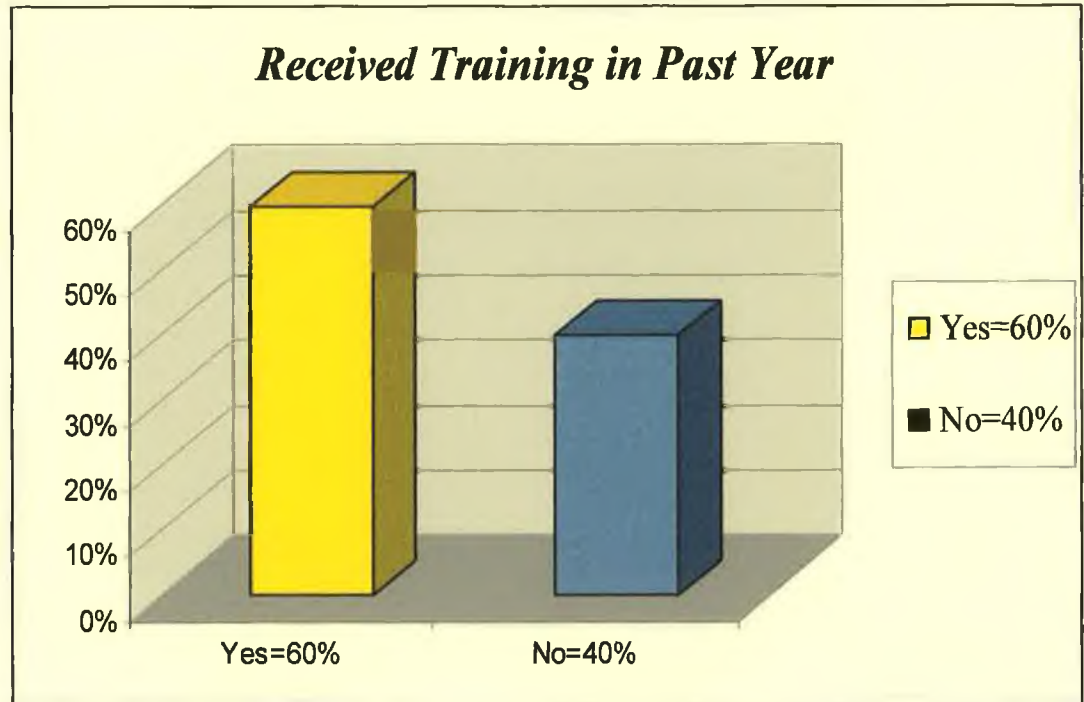
Q.1.B If yes, please explain what training you received, where and how long was it for?

This was an opened ended question which yielded a variety of different answers so I was unable to construct a chart or diagram.
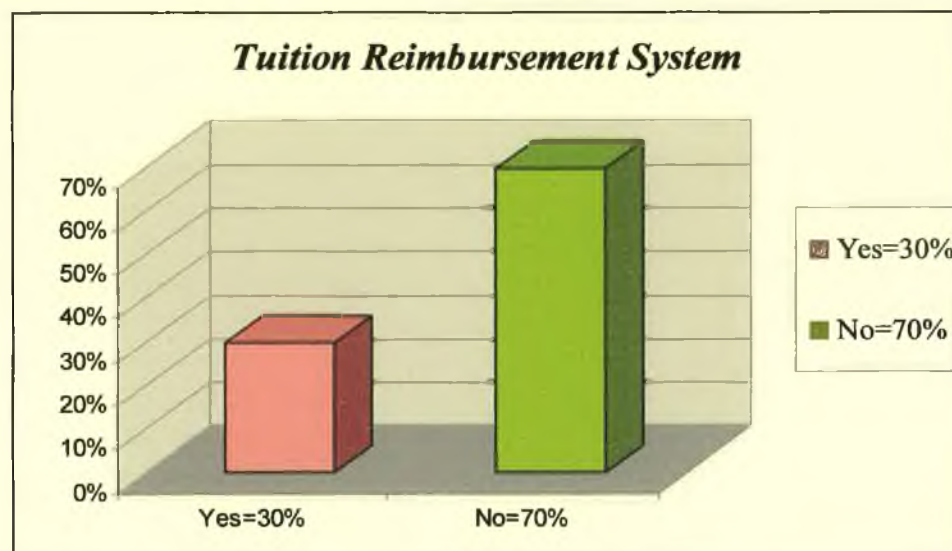
Q.1.B If no, would you have liked to receive training? What would you like to receive training in?

This was an opened ended question which yielded a variety of different answers so I was unable to construct a chart or diagram.

Q.2 Has all the training you have received been on the job?

On the Job Training

10%

90%

■ Yes=90%

■ No=10%

Q.3 How many hours training have you received in the past year?

This was an opened ended question which yielded a variety of different answers so I was unable to construct a chart or diagram. 40% of employee's stated that they had received no training in the past year while the remaining 60% had received training in the past year, but their hours of training received varied greatly from one another.

Q.4 Are you aware of any tuition reimbursement system?

Tuition Reimbursement System

70%	
60%	
50%	
40%	
30%	
20%	
10%	
0%	

Yes=30%   No=70%

■ Yes=30%

■ No=70%

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Q.5 Have you been involved in any new training initiative in the past 2 years?

Training Initiative in Past 2 Years

20%

80%

☐ Yes=20%

■ No=80%

Q.6 Are you aware of any internal online programmes which provide training activities?

Employee Awareness of Internal Online Programmes

No=50%

Yes=50%

0%   10%   20%   30%   40%   50%

■ No=50%

■ Yes=50%
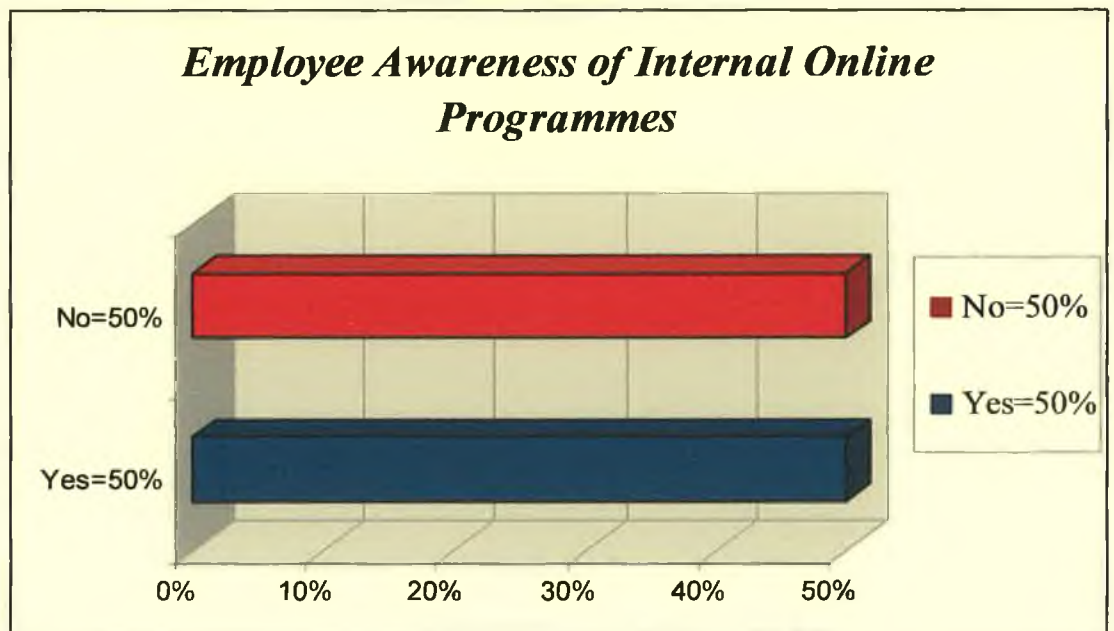
Q.7 Did you know your company has a link with the Institute of Technology in Sligo to improve its employee's skills?
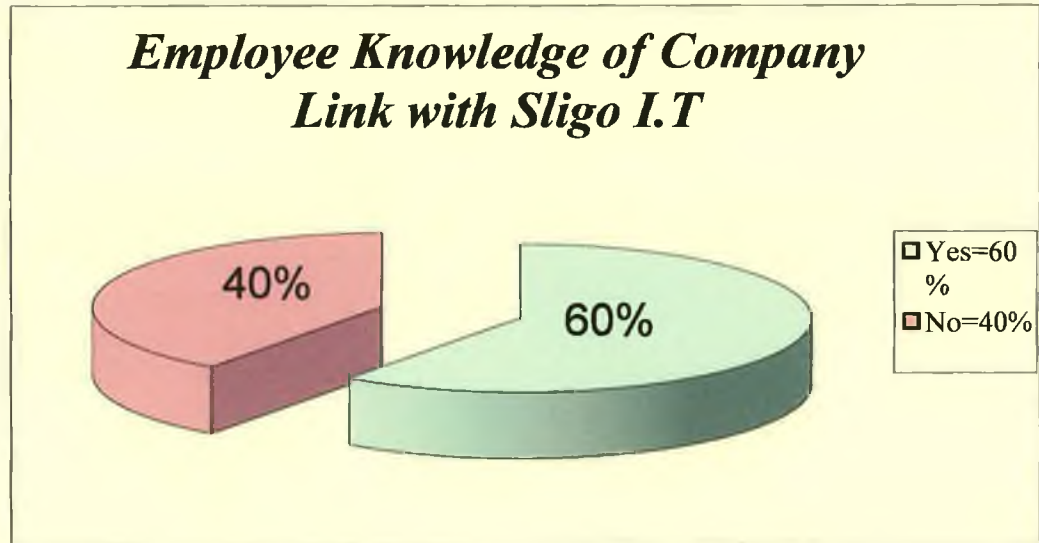
Q.8.A. Do you participate in any of the training or other programme's which commence in autumn?
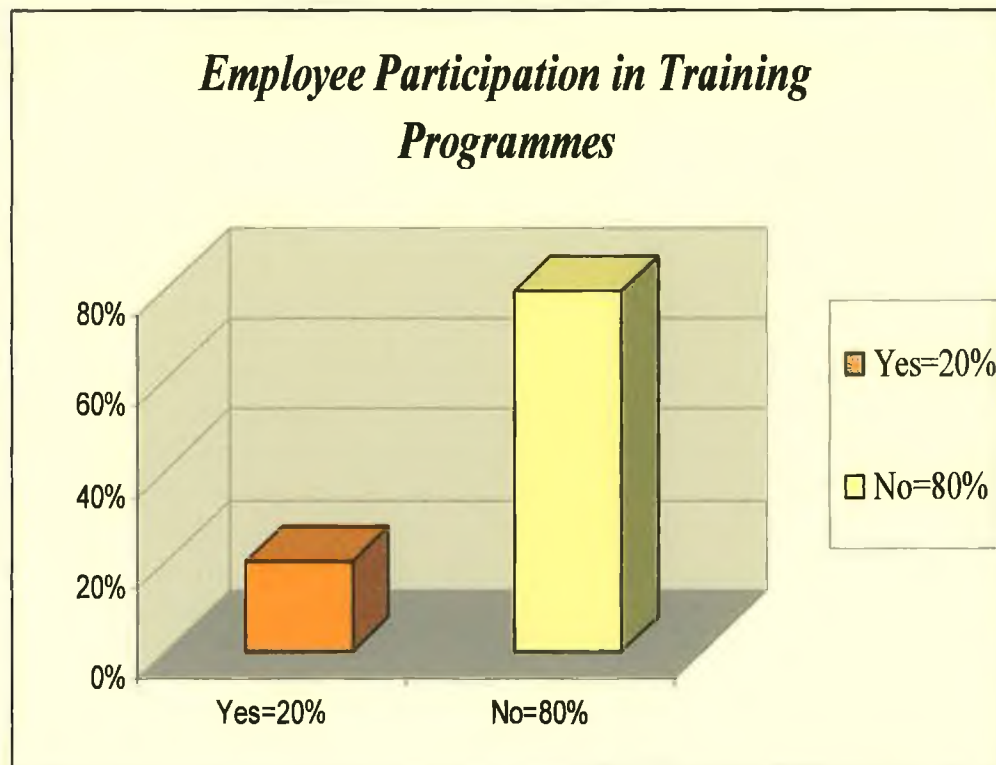
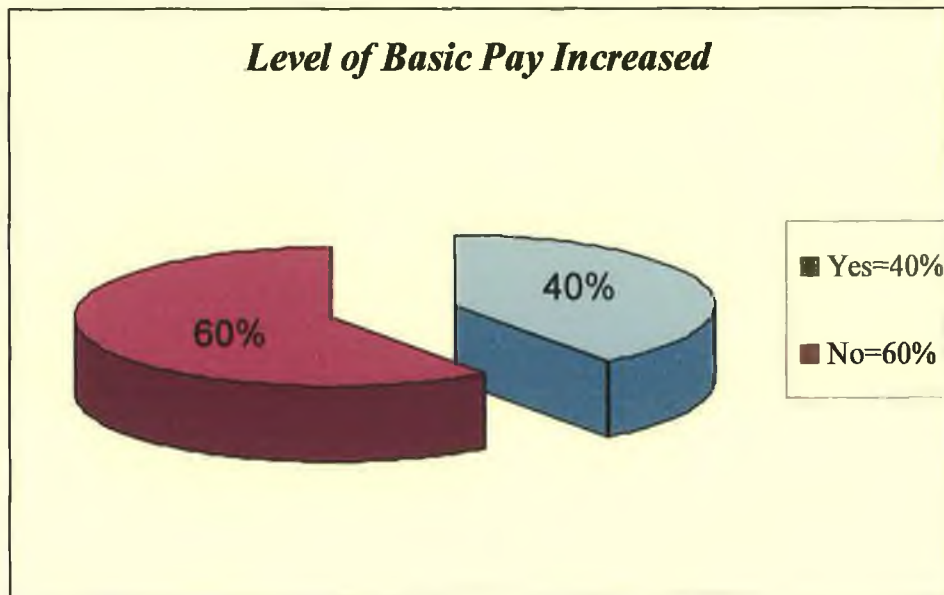*Q.8.B. If yes, which one and why do you complete this programme?*

This was an open ended question so I was unable to construct a chart or diagram as the data varied for one employee to the next.
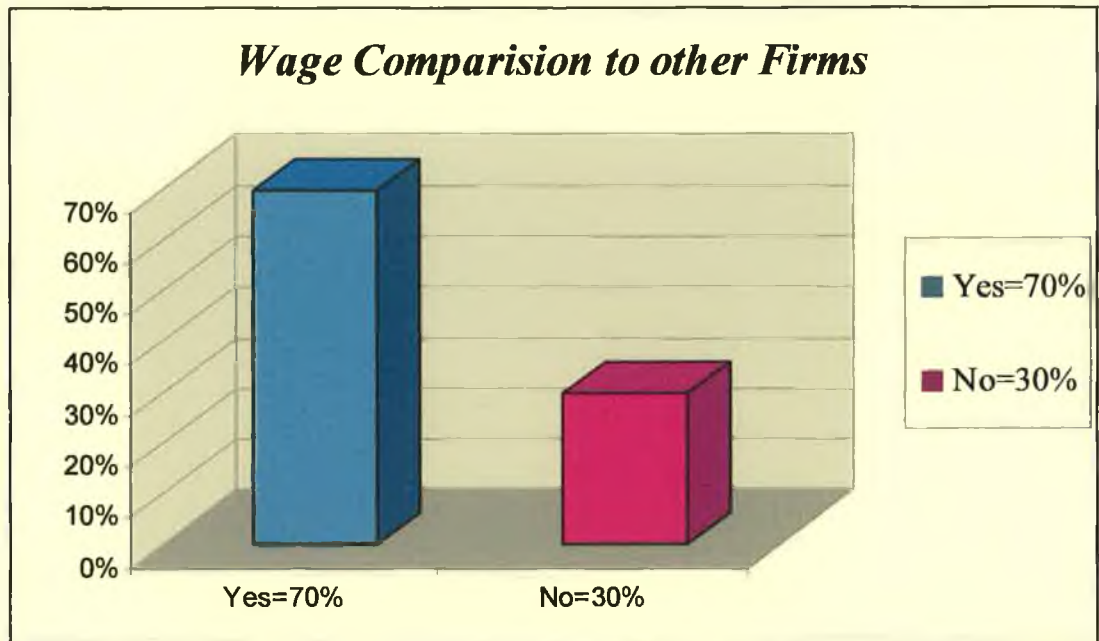
Q.8.C. If no, why not?

This was an open ended question so I was unable to construct a chart or diagram as the data varied for one employee to the next.
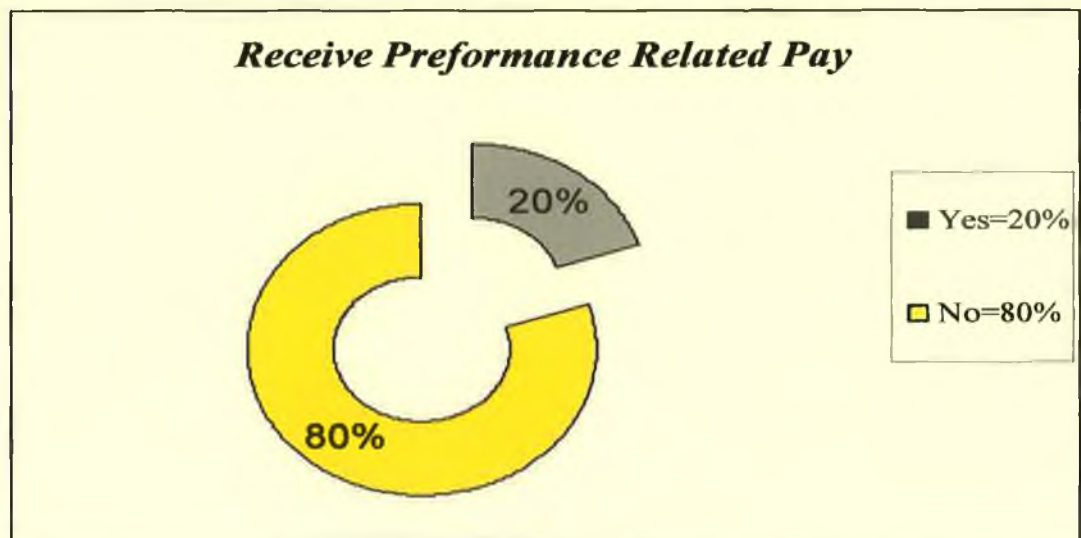
Section 5: Payment

*Q.1 Has your level of basic pay increased in the past 2 years (excluding promotions)?*

Level of Basic Pay Increased

60%   40%   Yes=40%   No=60%

Q.2 Do you feel your wages compare on par within the locality and industry?

Wage Comparision to other Firms

■ Yes=70%	
■ No=30%	

Q.3 Do you receive performance related pay?

Receive Preformance Related Pay

20%

80%

■ Yes=20%	
□ No=80%	

Q.4.A Have you undergone a performance appraisal in the past 2 years?
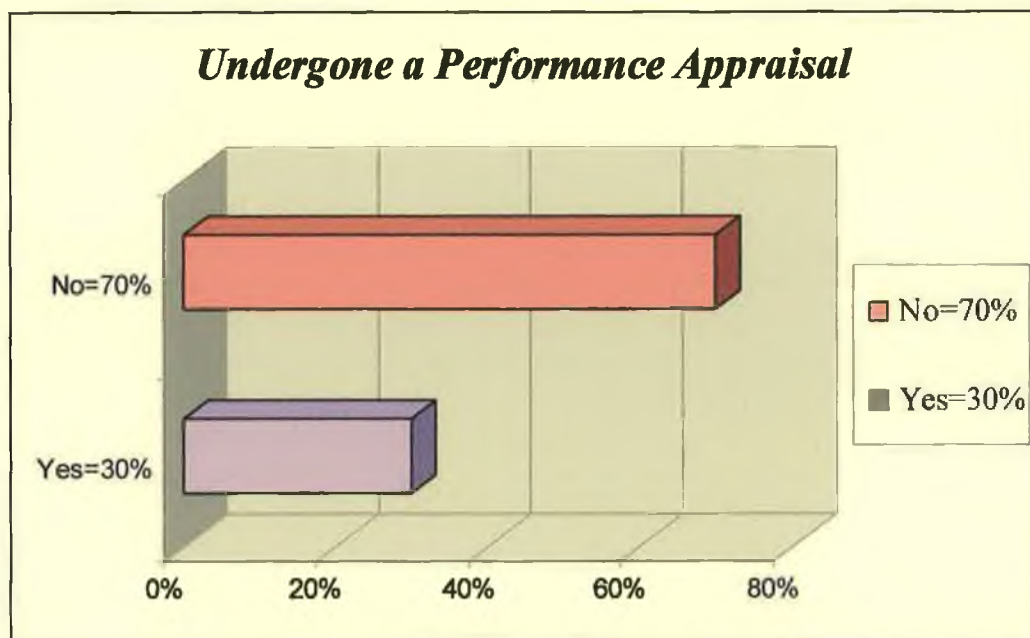
Q.4.B.If yes, can you please outline how long this took and what method was your supervisor used to complete your performance appraisal?

This was an opened ended question which yielded a variety of different answers so I was unable to construct a chart or diagram

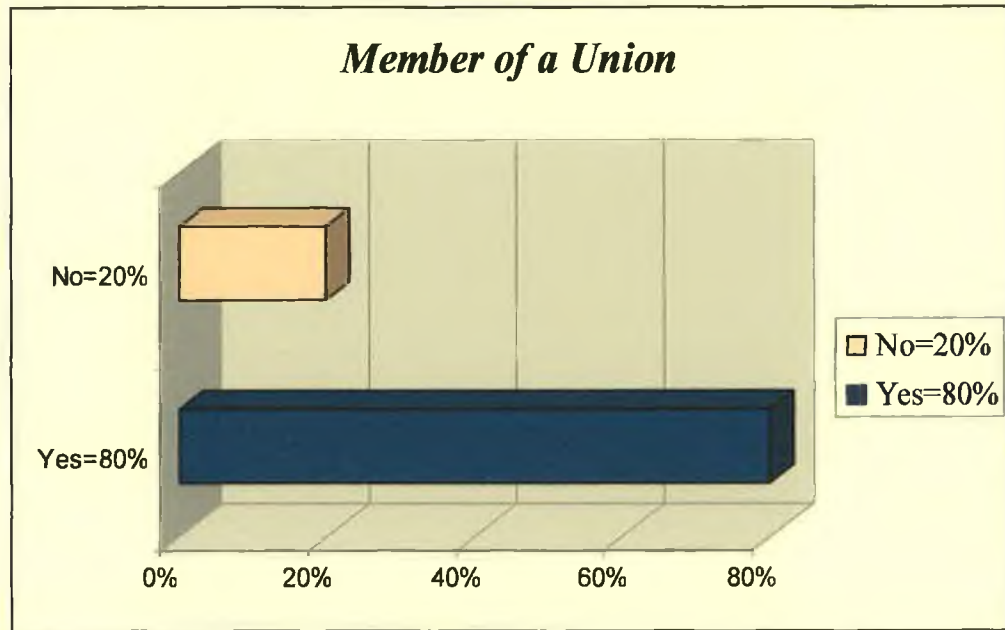*Q.5.A. Have you received any awards or rewards in your time working with this company?*

Q.5.B. If yes, please explain:

This was an opened ended question which yielded a variety of different answers so I was unable to construct a chart or diagram
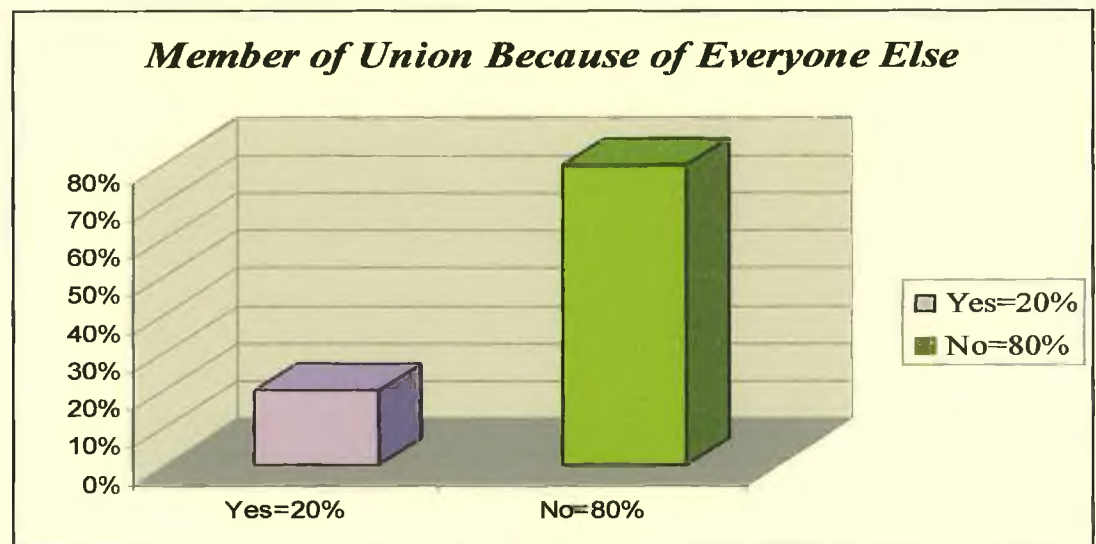
Section 6: HR Department

Q.1.A. Are you a member of a union?

Q.1.B. If yes, which one?

All the employee's that answered yes to this question stated that they are a member of SIPTU.

Q.2 Are you just a member of the union because everyone else is?

Q.3 What benefits do you believe you obtain from being a member?

This was an opened ended question which yielded a variety of different answers so I was unable to construct a chart or diagram.

Q.4.A. Are you aware of any new HR initiatives that have been introduced in the past two years?

Aware of any New HR Initiatives

10%

90%

■ Yes=10%

□ No=90%

Q.4.B If yes, which initiatives?

The 10% skipped this question which leads the author to believe that they were unsure of any HR initiatives. One could suggest that they ticked the wrong box by mistake.

Q.5 What is your understanding of the function of the HR? For example do you view it as the department that helps you? Or do you view it as another administration department?

50 % of employee's viewed the department as yet another Administration department while the other 50% of employee's view the HR department as a department that helps you. There is a down the line divide as to what the function of the HR department is for employees.

Q.6 Are you aware of any part of the HR department that has been outsourced?

100% of employees were unaware that any part of the HR department has been outsourced therefore there was no requirement to construct a chart or diagram.

Appendix D: European locations of Company X

20 Manufacturing Sites in Europe
3 Major Research Centers

- Manufacturing plant
- Research & Development Center