

## Exploration of some of the 7 concepts identified as constituting a “circular” HRM

### **Business Case: Agricultores de la Vega (Valencia, Spain)**

SAV is a service company founded in 1900, which conducts its activity in the field of the environment, from the cleaning of public and private spaces; integrated waste management to water treatment plant maintenance. It currently provides services to the autonomous communities of Valencia, Cataluña, La Rioja, Castilla la Mancha, Andalucía, Aragón, Navarra, País Vasco, Murcia, Galicia, Asturias, Extremadura, Baleares and Madrid in Spain. Their mission as company is to provide efficient responses to the environmental and urban needs of cities, through the highest standard of quality, innovation and efficiency.

**Interview** : Alejandro Carles Huevo, Human Resources Director, SAV Valencia

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#### **Context:**

Their services vary from urban services, integrated water cycle, treatment and waste disposal, conservation of protected natural areas, landscaping, maintenance and integral cleaning of building and facilities, engineering and environmental works.

This includes an innovation department with focus on circular economy, national and European projects focused on R&D (research and development) in projects such as H2020, LIFE, etc.

SAV employs nearly 1.600 people.

They work and collaborate with contracts and subcontracts with the public administration and its activities, they usually have their own conditions. The management of around 1,700 employees with all their sectoral labour agreements in different sectors is their main task. They manage a huge variety of labour agreements that have different condition to different employees, depending on the sector they work in (urban services, integrated water cycle, treatment and waste disposal, conservation of protected natural areas, landscaping, etc.).

## Concept 1

### The design of 'work practices' and 'work spaces', emphasising maximum positive impact on a worker during his/her employed experience

SAV has an annual training plan, whereby they ask internally each employees and manager their training needs. This happens every last trimester of each year to know the training needs for next year. They ask and set an annual series of interview with the work representatives to assess the needs of the employees in each sector. Training courses are specialized depending on the area of knowledge and the set of skills needed in the different sectors they work. The three types of sources above serve as a way to draft and concretise the annual training plan. Training plans are tailored having in mind the knowledge, time and skills of the employees. Having in mind that the majority (90%) of the staff is on the public road, the influence they have on the employees is small. Regarding well-being, they have gradually changed the vehicles employees use in their daily activity (they are more ergonomic and easy to use). They have also focused on the trolleys that the sweepers carry (to make them more agile)

For the staff working at the office, they have completed a three-year plan for the comprehensive refurbishment of all the facilities. Much larger offices, with more space between offices (pre-COVID) improved air conditioning, improved furniture and better seats. Through the channels at the disposal of employees (see section) they welcome any other initiative. People with families and children are given priority to change shifts during the COVID pandemic especially. Telework as such can only be limited to 10% of the workforce, who are in offices. Those who worked from offices are given the necessary material to carry out the work from home. They still have several people teleworking, although they can work on site thanks to the reform, and the health measures they have taken (gels, masks, etc)

They did not have a "teleworking" schedule before the pandemic. Now they implemented as well a mixed category.

## Concept 2

### Processes of understanding and responding to the needs of workers to optimise redeployment within the same company

One employee review process with a career orientation and development starts at the moment of the interview or integration process, when they are hired. Employees are asked about their interests and future prospects in the company. This also happens during annual employee reviews (formal) and on an informal and daily basis (employees have an easy relation with their superior or intermediate positions). For those cases where employees show willingness to change role within the company, SAV has step by step internship programmes that introduce the tasks and

responsibilities of the new job for the employees. After this internship, and whenever there is an internal job vacancy, employees may apply for it. A similar programme is addressed to women paid for the truck driving licence in order to promote equal opportunities within the company, especially in a sector that it is masculinised.

Regarding employee career management there are two types of structures: A formal channel, through a letterbox of requests, emails and an internal intranet for the employees that may access it at any time. Here they can see training materials, internal job positions and communicate with their superiors. An informal channel, the worker tells his manager on a daily basis, or to the committees. As for training needs of more technical personnel (HR department; managers or others), SAV pays for those. This comes as a result of **constant feedback** from employees and the needs of the company.

### Concept 3

**Supporting the reintegration of a worker so he/she, following a period of leave (short/long term) can continue to be employed in his/her original function or in a new role within the same company**

First of all, through the company insurance there is a constant monitoring from the medical service that makes a follow up on the worker. In the case of a short absence (1-2 weeks or less) and when the reason is health, there is a medical control service. In the case of a longer absence, especially due to medical or health reasons (long term illness), an assessment is carried out to identify whether or not the person has recovered all the abilities and returns to his or her job. If in a case of longer absence, the employee cannot perform his/her old responsibilities they are supported by a group of employees who assist him/her in some of the tasks until he/she recovers. However, if the employee is permanently disabled to perform this work, he/she may ask for a change within the company, the employee starts a integration programme as if he/she were a newcomer. On the other hand, if the employee wishes, he or she can claim permanent disability. In that sense, the company also offers legal assistance.

In addition, and as a complement, HR has an internal procedure through which they call people to ask how they are and how they find themselves. This is done while the person is on leave and gives a personal touch, something that is inner to the culture of the company. There is a very interesting figure, and one that has been very successful, which is the so called “**adaptation**” figure or process. It consists of work adaptations made for employees that can no longer perform certain activities due to medical injuries or healthy conditions.

#### **Concept 4**

**The mentorship of a worker who is considering leaving the company (e.g. due to retirement, or the completion of a project) to apply their skill-set in a different role within the company (e.g. proactive use of skill set prior to retirement, or re-orient skill set to a new project)**

Every time someone is hired they receive a welcome protocol which explains a little about the company, methodology, what is expected from them. Also, there is legal training in occupational risk prevention, specific training for the job, training in the company's culture, operation, structure, who to turn to in the event of a problem. From there, training depends on the type of activity they do and the job they hold. It varies from the simplest of the tasks to the more complex ones. Depending on this the approach is different. In all positions, there is an initial "shadowing" performed by other colleagues or employees to take notes on how to do the practical job after the theoretic training. While they are part of this "transition" period, managers evaluate them and propose improvements or comments. Every two months the manager fills out a report pointing out the main conclusions of this transition period.

Secondly, they make public calls for job positions, especially for managers. When a manager position needs to be filled, the vacancy is posted on the announcement portal and on the employee portal.

#### **Concept 5**

**Categorising the skill set of workers with a view to planning and implementation of worker-centred strategies that optimise the categorised skills sets within a company ecosystem**

There is a common procedure to call everyone in to the main offices, so to have a direct feedback from employees. A small interview takes place, with some formal items that are taken into account to then fill out a report. This can result in skills-training for those that need it or rewards for those that show good results.

However, there is a part of the staff that is selected by SAV. Some of the points SAV considers when hiring someone focus on: Minimum set of knowledge, skills and competences. People who already have some additional skills (plumber, carpenter, bricklayer) are highly appreciated because they may have some related skills. From a technical point of view, no much is required from them. Social skills are an asset. Their work is on the streets, and people must also know how to handle possible complaints from private citizens. Soft skills are important here too

## **Concept 6**

### **The prioritisation of human centred optimisation over contractual obligation**

If the company needs to fill a position, be it a specialized profile or a basic profile, HR does it first of all internally (internal promotion) and then they publish a job position. If they detect that, in a certain work team there is some lack of skills, knowledge or competences, it is supposed to be detected through the manager who communicates what the problem is. The main tool to be used is through the internal reports. Once they are detected and action is taken from there.

## **Concept 7**

### **Supporting the transition of a worker into the external job market where a worker is no longer meeting the requirements of their current contractual obligations**

In SAV Before getting to a contractual notice period, there are several stages or phases to go through. This would be the last step. Some actions include verbal warnings, sanctions letters, reports about any problems, personal interviews or verbal warnings from HR. Sanctions are not usually the way but last option. Sometimes with these processes the company may spot the issue and solve it before any further action is taken. If any of these processes work out, the contractual notice period is informed following the Spanish law. A HR agent is assigned to deal with the whole process. The HR agent explains the options ahead, the employee has (to sign, not to sign, to have some legal clarifications). HR also informs about steps to do from now on such as the requirements and steps for employment benefits.