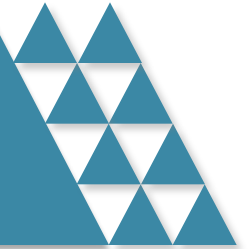
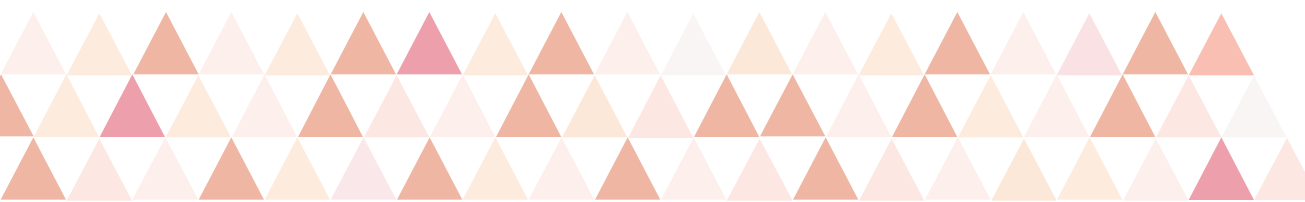


# Line Managers and HRM



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# HRM and Line Managers



## *Line managers play a critical role in delivering HRM*

- Line managers and employees have substantial discretion as to how to do their jobs
- It is more likely that they will use their discretion positively if they feel that they are being fairly treated and this arguably originates with the relationship between line managers and employees.

Adopting positive HR policies is not enough, **the way in which they are implemented by line managers is critical to the way in which employees respond.**



# HRM – a shared responsibility



Source: Mullins (2009:500)

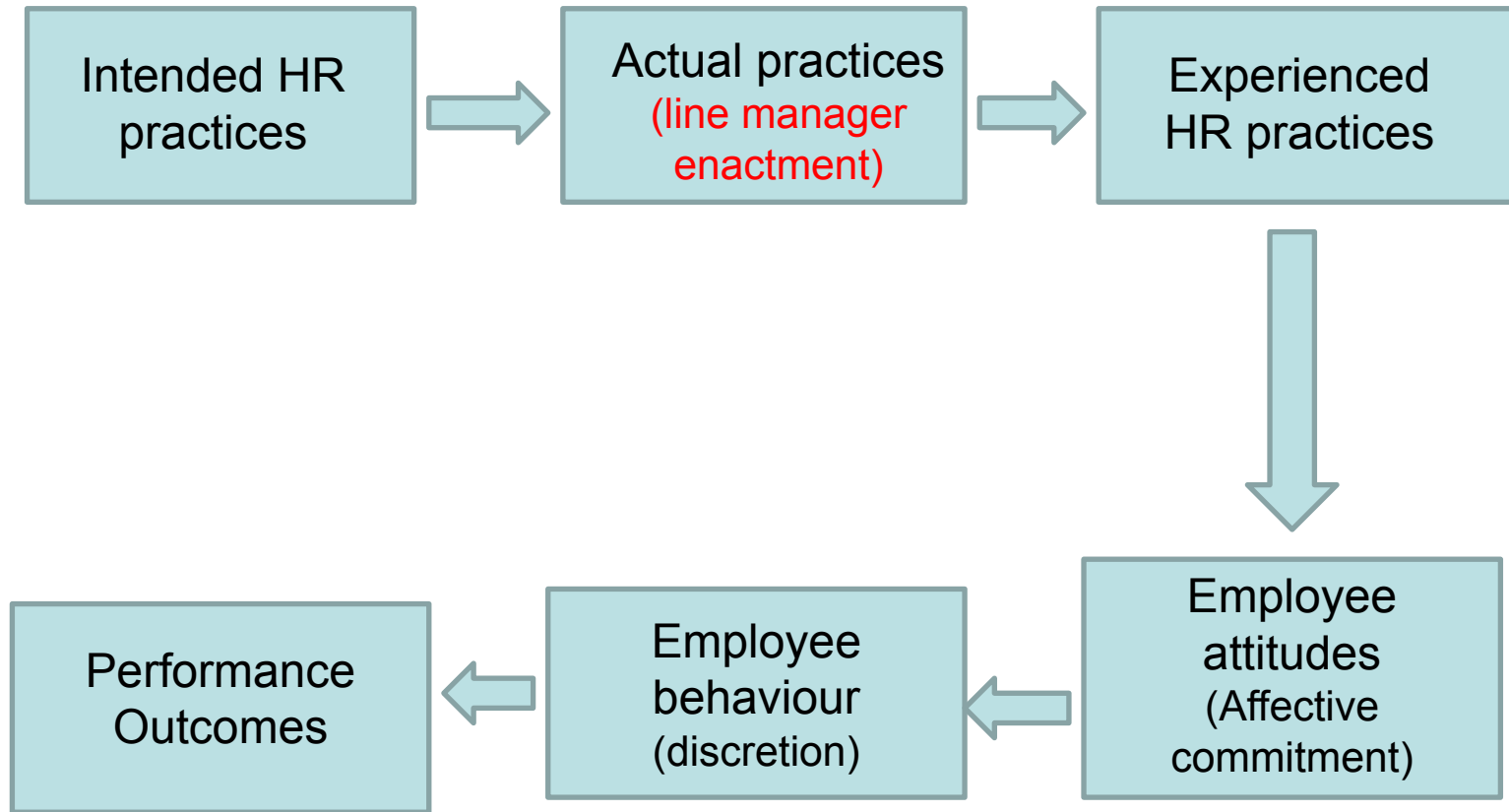
# Who are Line managers and why are they important?

- Managers of people – the non specialist HR manager
- Key link in causal chain between people management & performance
- New significance in HRM model as it is becoming more popular to “return HR to the line”

*“It could be said that HR may propose but line managers dispose – line managers can bring HR policies to life but they can also put them to death” (Armstrong, 2011:141)*



# HR Causal Chain Model



Source: Purcell *et al.* (2008)



# Line managers views and responsibilities

*“Line manager perspectives can also be mixed, with devolution of HR activities being perceived as either empowering or merely unwelcome extra work.” (Pilbeam and Corbridge, 2010:80)*

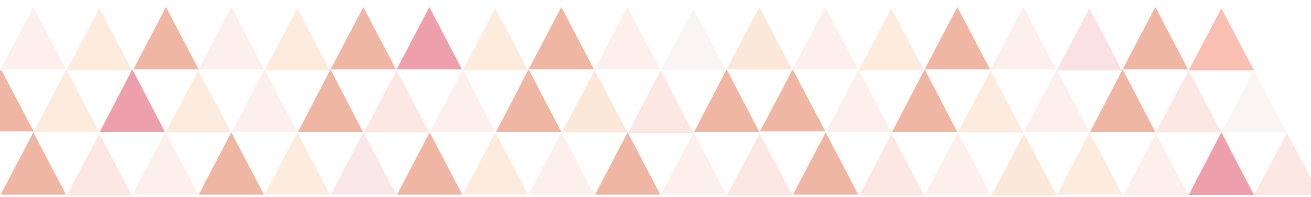
## Operational Aspects

- Recruitment and selection
- Training
- Discipline
- Absence monitoring

## Leadership Roles

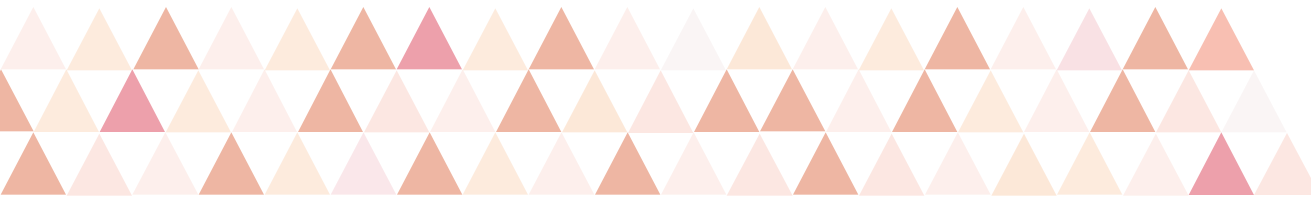
- Encouraging employee involvement
- Reducing resistance to change
- Emotional engagement and relationships

Some responsibilities in both categories for example performance management

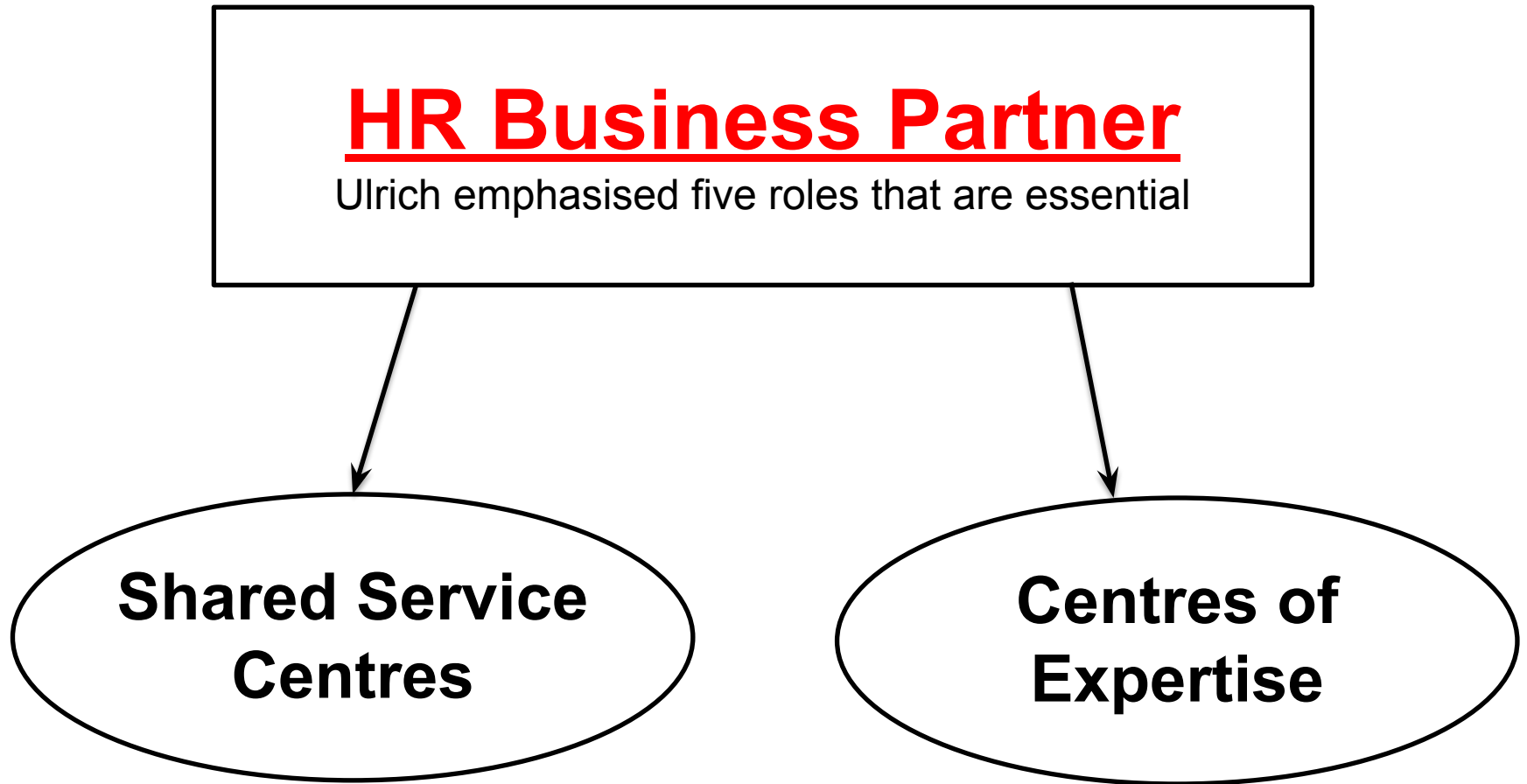


# Devolution of responsibility to the line

- Varies in extent between countries – depends on the expectation of what a managers job is
- Varies across different HR responsibilities
- Constrained by policies and “guidelines”
- Relationship between HR and line
  - Business partner
  - eHR & HR services



# Business Partner Model



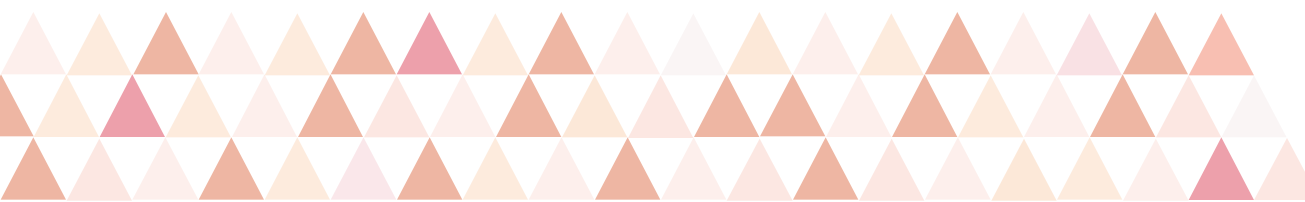
Adopted from CIPD (2015) and Foot and Hook (2015)





# Ulrich and Brockbank's 5 Roles (2005)

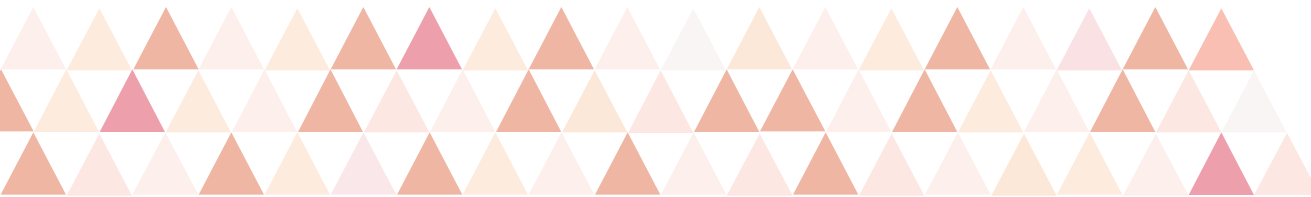
- Strategic partner
- Human capital developer
- Functional expert
- Employee advocates
- HRM leader



# Motivations for devolving responsibility

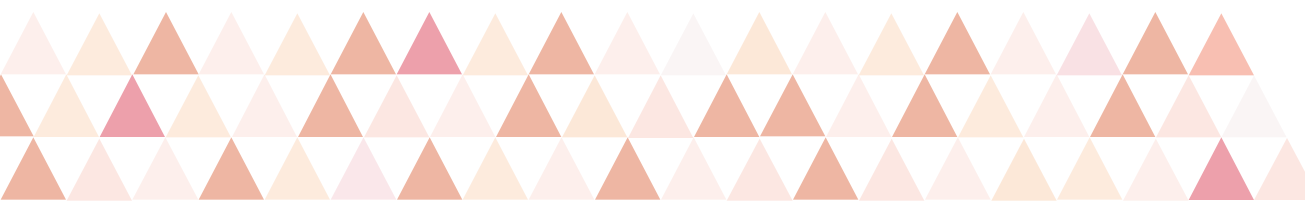
- Cost reduction and efficiency (avoiding duplication of effort)
- Provide a more comprehensive approach to HRM
- To place responsibility for HRM with the managers who manage people
- To speed up decision making
- As an alternative to out sourcing

Source: Brewster and Larsen (2000)



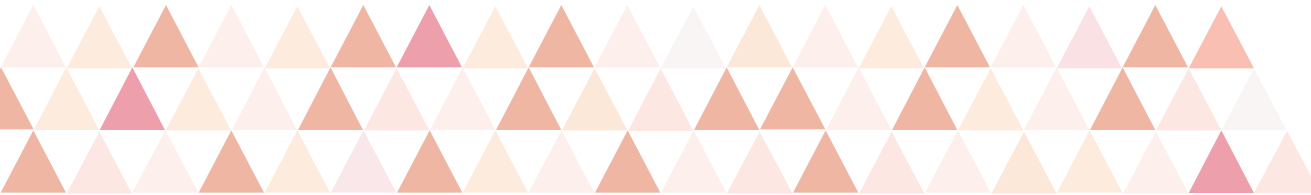
# Problems

- Lack of “ownership”
- Fear of constraint/bureaucracy in making decisions
- Lack of expertise or consistency between line managers
- Conflicting priorities – especially with business strategies
- Devolution of responsibility with authority
- Ensuring consistency/compliance with good practice & law
- Resources necessary to ensure line manager effectiveness
- Duplication of effort with different managers creating new ways of doing things



# Challenges

- Reconciling hard and soft HR
  - Expectations of senior management?
  - Expectations of subordinates?
- Selection and training of line managers
- Lack of representation of their interests are questionable
- HRM ambivalence about devolution



# Supporting middle managers

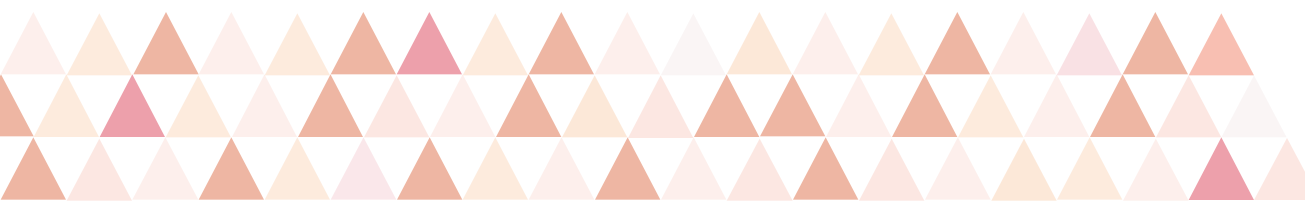
- ❖ HR strategies should be broad themes, to be contextualised at operational level
- ❖ Middle managers should contribute to determination of the themes
- ❖ Middle managers need opportunities to gain wider perspectives (project groups)
- ❖ HR needs to support line at point of delivery
- ❖ Development of middle managers needs to be about contribution to strategic change

Source: Marchington and Wilkinson (2002)



## Activity surrounding: ‘Front-Line manager’s as agents in the HRM-performance causal chain.....’

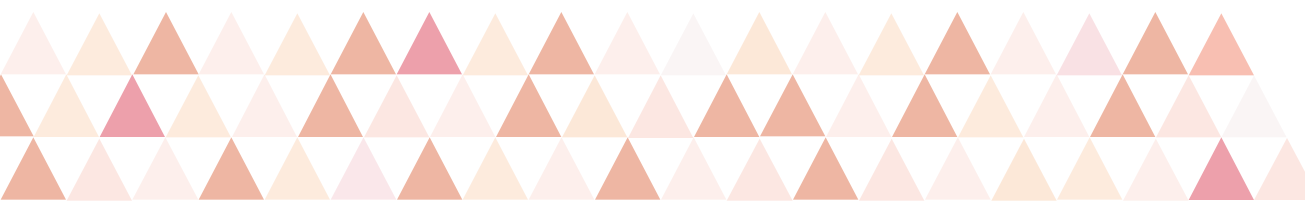
- Do you agree with the research that interpersonal relationships are critical element of HR Systems?
- In this research there is evidence that longer service employees and older employees rate their managers worse – why might this be?
- Evaluate the approach the Selfridges took to improving HR. What were the key elements, strengths and weaknesses of this?
- In the light of the findings of this research how should an organisation go about developing its HR Policies?



# Questions to analyse the article:

## The Filling in the Sandwich: HRM and middle managers in the health sector

1. What are the factors which have contributed to the growing pressure on middle managers in the health sector?
2. To what extent are these factors also likely to be found in other public and private sector organisations?
3. Which aspects of HRM work appear to evidence the greatest ambiguity regarding responsibilities of the HR function and the line manager? Why might this be the case?
4. What could the organisation do to address this situation & support middle managers?



# Conclusions

- ❖ Devolution is viewed with mixed reaction, with some line managers enthusiastic about taking on HR responsibilities, whereas others are displeased at the prospect (Gautam and Davis, 2007).
- ❖ For devolution to be successful, line managers must be given the necessary training, support and time to carry out HR activities.
- ❖ Francis and Keegan (2006) argue that HR runs the risk of losing employee confidence and trust by releasing transactional HR activities to line managers who may be unprepared or unwilling to take on the responsibilities.





# Additional Reading Resources

- HR Business Partnering Factsheet (from the CIPD)
- Purcell and Hutchinson (2007) Front-line managers as agents in the HRM-performance causal chain: theory, analysis and evidence
- Pilbeam and Corbridge (2010) Chapter 1: People resourcing and talent management

