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Strategic Human Resource Planning and Cross-Functional Talent Deployment: A Managerial Appointment Case in Company R

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Abstract: In an era of accelerating workforce complexity, many organizations face the challenge of misaligned talent due to disparities in educational backgrounds and professional experience. This paper explores how Company R strategically addresses a managerial vacancy through internal talent deployment across divisions. Using the case of Jeff's appointment as Assistant Human Resource Manager, the study examines the structured decision-making process undertaken by top HR leadership in aligning internal competencies with organizational needs. The research highlights how cross-functional succession planning, internal training, and leadership foresight can support agile talent placement. The central research question investigates the strategic steps executed by Company R's HRM leadership in responding to managerial turnover when suitable candidates are located outside the affected department. This study contributes to the discourse on internal mobility, human resource forecasting, and evidence-based management practices.

Keyword: Human Resource Planning, Cross-Functional Talent, Internal Promotion, Managerial Vacancy, Strategic HRM, Talent Mapping, Workforce Agility

INTRODUCTION

Strategic human resource planning (HRP) is a core function for sustaining organizational performance, particularly in turbulent environments where agility and precision in talent allocation are crucial (Armstrong & Taylor, 2023; Chong & Zainal, 2024; Ben-Hador & Yitshaki, 2025). HRP entails forecasting future workforce requirements, aligning talent with organizational objectives, and ensuring seamless internal mobility across roles and departments (Sopandi et al., 2024). Yet, many firms face a critical dilemma: the underutilization of internal human capital due to misalignment between employee competencies, educational qualifications, and job demands (Karyono et al., 2023).

In today's workforce landscape, mismatches between employees' academic backgrounds and job functions have become increasingly prevalent. This disparity limits the optimal deployment of skills, often leading to latent talent remaining untapped within unrelated departments (Sudiro & Putri, 2023). Organizations, therefore, must adopt forward-thinking strategies to identify and mobilize hidden capabilities, especially during critical events such as managerial turnover.

Company R, a mid-sized service organization operating a chain of hotels and restaurants in major cities across Denmark, exemplifies this challenge. The company's strategic service hubs are located in Copenhagen, Aarhus, Odense, and Aalborg—each contributing to the brand's premium positioning and operational complexity across the country.

Note: This map illustrates the geographic distribution of Company R's branches in Denmark's four largest urban centers.

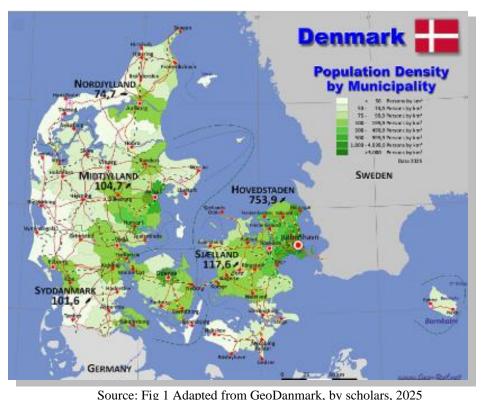


Figure 1. Strategic locations of Company R's hotels and restaurants across Denmark

In the context of Denmark's high standard of workplace well-being, the work climate adds another layer of complexity to HR decisions (Yusriani et al., 2024). Danish labor practices emphasize collaborative leadership, psychological safety, employee trust, and transparent communication—especially relevant in service industries where interpersonal dynamics and team stability are critical (Mahendra & Yusriani, 2025; Bartusevičius et al., 2021). Failing to uphold these principles during promotions or departmental shifts can risk internal disengagement and cultural fragmentation.

Moreover, Denmark is globally recognized for its employee-centric and family-friendly work models, contributing to both productivity and sustainable lifestyles (Lepeley et al., 2021; Frone, 2003). These models demand that HR decisions—especially those involving cross-functional transfers—be implemented with fairness, foresight, and adequate support mechanisms.

The sudden resignation of a key HR manager in Company R thus presented a strategic challenge—not only in fulfilling a critical operational role but also in maintaining organizational climate and employee morale. The company's response was unconventional yet reflective of emerging HRM trends. Leadership identified Jeff, a procurement division employee, as a candidate for HR leadership based on demonstrated competence, adaptability, and leadership potential—despite his lack of formal HR background.

This type of cross-functional promotion reflects an increasingly strategic HRM approach where organizations leverage hidden internal talent to fill urgent capability gaps. Such actions demand holistic analysis: from skill audits and readiness assessments to future development planning and organizational alignment (Boxall & Purcell, 2022; Ulrich et al., 2017).

To maintain fairness and transparency, leaders must communicate clearly, define selection criteria explicitly, and ensure organizational support structures are in place (Armstrong, 2022). Overlooking these dimensions can erode trust, particularly in service environments that depend on internal cohesion and consistent service delivery.

This study, grounded in the qualitative research framework outlined by Creswell and Creswell (2017), investigates the strategic steps undertaken by Company R's HR leadership in addressing this vacancy. The core research question is:

What strategic steps are taken by HRM leadership in Company R when a managerial vacancy occurs, and the most suitable talents are located outside the department in question?

Through this case, the paper contributes to advancing knowledge on agile HR planning, succession management, and the cross-functional mobilization of human capital in service-intensive, climate-sensitive industries like hospitality.

Overview of Human Resource Planning in Service Industries

Human Resource Planning (HRP) is the strategic process of forecasting future talent needs and aligning workforce competencies with organizational goals (Sopandi et al., 2024; Sutrisno, 2023). In service-based industries—such as hospitality and food service—HRP is particularly vital due to the sector's high dependency on human interactions, customer service consistency, and operational adaptability (Yusriani et al., 2024). These sectors face rapid fluctuations in customer expectations, seasonal workforce requirements, and high turnover rates, making a responsive and data-driven HRP model essential (Lepeley et al., 2021).

Digitalization has added another layer of complexity to workforce planning. According to Chopra and Sharma (2020), increased automation, hybrid work environments, and shifting generational expectations have compelled organizations to revise traditional planning models. This is especially important in countries like Denmark, where national work culture highly values psychological well-being, transparent growth pathways, and equitable workplace policies (Mahendra & Yusriani, 2025; Frone, 2003).

In service firms like Company R, HRP not only determines staffing levels but also influences employee satisfaction, team stability, and customer experience. HR planning must therefore accommodate both operational needs and the sociocultural expectations of the workforce, reinforcing its strategic value in modern organizations.

Internal Mobility and Cross-Functional Talent Deployment

Internal mobility refers to the movement of employees within an organization, whether through promotions, lateral transfers, or role reassignments (Ulrich et al., 2017). In the past, this primarily involved upward mobility within the same department. Today, however, HR practices increasingly embrace cross-functional internal mobility, where individuals are placed into new departments based on their transferable skills, learning agility, and leadership potential.

This approach enables organizations to unlock latent internal talent and overcome rigid role boundaries, especially in cases where academic backgrounds and current job roles do not align (Karyono et al., 2023). For example, a skilled employee from the procurement department might be strategically transitioned into an HR leadership role, provided their competencies align with the new role's strategic and interpersonal demands. This reflects an evolving paradigm in human resource management, where practical experience, interpersonal effectiveness, and contextual intelligence are increasingly valued alongside formal educational qualifications. In the service sector, where human interactions, emotional labor,

and operational agility are central to performance, such cross-functional mobility is often necessary and beneficial (Yusriani et al., 2024).

These transitions allow organizations to leverage internal talent pools more efficiently, particularly when formal qualifications may not fully capture a candidate's leadership potential or operational insight. As Armstrong and Taylor (2023) note, effective succession and internal mobility strategies require not only procedural fairness but also managerial discretion, enabling leaders to match roles with individuals who exhibit both capability and alignment with the organization's evolving needs.

Bartusevičius et al. (2021) argue that post-pandemic HR strategies must emphasize leadership adaptability and workforce fluidity. Boxall and Purcell (2022) further support this view, noting that organizations benefit from increased resilience and engagement when they invest in cross-functional development pathways and transparent mobility mechanisms. However, such transitions require structured onboarding and retraining programs to mitigate performance gaps and align employees with new role expectations.

Importantly, this form of internal mobility depends heavily on managerial decision-making skills—the ability to assess intangible qualities like adaptability, motivation, and team fit, often without standardized criteria. Thus, the judgment and prior experience of senior managers play a critical role in determining the success of cross-departmental transitions.

Strategic Succession Planning and Managerial Appointments

Succession planning involves identifying, mentoring, and positioning internal talent to occupy leadership roles when vacancies arise (Armstrong, 2022). In the service industry, where team dynamics and leadership presence are directly tied to service quality, this process becomes indispensable. Effective succession planning helps reduce operational disruption and nurtures a culture of career progression.

However, succession strategies must extend beyond formal checklists. In practice, the process is often guided by managerial experience and intuition. Leaders frequently assess a candidate's historical performance, soft skills, and growth mindset when making promotion decisions. Lepeley et al. (2021) advocate for human-centered succession strategies, where empathy, transparency, and workplace inclusivity are valued throughout the process.

Creswell and Creswell (2017) emphasize that qualitative research provides meaningful insights into how such managerial decisions are formed. Particularly in organizations like Company R, where a non-HR staff member (Jeff) is promoted into an HR leadership role, the role of decision-makers' past experiences becomes central. Senior managers often rely on a mix of structured data and unstructured professional judgment to assess whether a candidate from a different division can succeed in a new context.

Thus, the quality of HR decision-making is not only a product of organizational policy but also a reflection of individual managerial wisdom, leadership training, and cross-sectoral awareness. This aspect is underexplored in literature and represents a critical junction between strategic HR planning and leadership psychology.

Organizational Climate and Work Culture in Denmark

Denmark's labor environment is shaped by a strong social model that promotes fairness, trust, and work-life balance (Mahendra & Yusriani, 2025). With its low power-distance culture and commitment to psychological safety, the Danish workplace places high expectations on the transparency and inclusiveness of HR decisions (Frone, 2003; Yusriani et al., 2024). Leaders are expected to act as facilitators rather than authority figures, and this greatly influences how promotions and role changes are perceived.

In service firms, where interpersonal dynamics and emotional labor are central to operations, maintaining a healthy organizational climate is non-negotiable. A poorly communicated internal promotion—especially across departments—can trigger feelings of

unfairness or mistrust among peers. Therefore, HR decisions must not only be fair but must be seen as fair, requiring strong communication and stakeholder alignment.

Moreover, Denmark's emphasis on family-friendly policies, inclusive leadership, and professional growth demands that HR planning is personalized and sustainable (Lepeley et al., 2021). This makes the role of managers even more crucial, as their decisions reflect the organization's cultural and ethical stance.

Summary of Gaps in Literature

While extensive literature exists on HRP, internal mobility, and succession planning, relatively few studies focus on the decision-making experiences of managers when dealing with cross-functional talent deployment—particularly in service industries within Nordic cultural contexts. Most frameworks emphasize process standardization and metrics, often neglecting the soft, intuitive, and experience-based dimensions of leadership judgment.

This study aims to bridge this gap by examining how experienced leaders at Company R made strategic decisions to fill a critical HR position by promoting talent from an unrelated department. The research sheds light on the interplay between structured HR systems and unstructured managerial discretion in high-trust, employee-centered workplaces like Denmark.

METHODS

This study investigates how Company R's HR leadership makes strategic decisions when faced with a sudden managerial vacancy—particularly when the ideal candidate comes from a different department. The context of the case, involving the promotion of an employee named Jeff from procurement into a leadership role in HR, presents a compelling opportunity to examine real-world human resource planning (HRP) in action. This section outlines the purpose, research question, design, and methodology guiding the study.

Research Objectives

The primary objective is to understand how strategic human resource planning aligns with practical managerial decisions in a service-based organization operating in Denmark's unique labor environment. The study also aims to reveal the implicit decision-making competencies of HR leaders as they navigate role assignments that do not follow traditional departmental paths. In doing so, it contributes to a richer understanding of how formal HR structures intersect with the intuition and experience of senior managers.

Furthermore, the research seeks to highlight literature-based principles and contrast them with applied workplace behaviors. This includes exploring how well-prepared organizations are to leverage internal talent in unexpected ways, especially under cultural expectations of fairness, transparency, and psychological safety.

Guiding Research Question, At the heart of this inquiry lies the question: What strategic steps are taken by HRM leadership in Company R when a managerial vacancy occurs, and the most suitable talents are located outside the department in question?

This question guides an exploration of both formal HR processes and the informal, experience-based judgments managers use when evaluating candidates for critical roles.

Research Design and Approach

A qualitative case study design is adopted to capture the real-life complexity of internal promotions in a mid-sized service firm. Company R, with its hotel and restaurant operations across multiple cities in Denmark, provides a context where decisions must balance operational demands, service excellence, and cultural sensitivity.

By focusing on a single case—the appointment of Jeff—the study enables a detailed examination of internal mobility strategies, skill evaluations, and organizational readiness. This approach follows Creswell and Creswell's (2017) model of qualitative inquiry, which values in-depth, contextualized understanding over generalizability.

Data Sources and Collection

Data for this study were drawn from a combination of internal organizational documents, HR planning materials, role descriptions, and reflective feedback from key managerial decision-makers. These sources offer insight into how the HR vacancy was assessed, what selection criteria were used, and how leadership justified promoting a crossfunctional candidate.

To ensure a well-rounded perspective, secondary data from the academic literature on HRP, internal mobility, and workplace culture in Denmark were also reviewed. These sources helped establish a conceptual foundation and enabled thematic alignment between theory and practice (Lorenz & Holm, 2021). The study applies thematic analysis to synthesize patterns and themes emerging from the case. This involves reading and re-reading the collected material, identifying key concepts (e.g., skill alignment, succession urgency, cultural expectations), and interpreting them through the lens of strategic HR management.

This method is particularly suitable for capturing the nuance of managerial reasoning and workplace dynamics—especially when formal HR procedures leave space for discretion and personal judgment. Themes are then cross-referenced with literature to evaluate consistency, deviation, and insight.

Ethical Considerations

All reflections and materials used in this research are anonymized and handled with strict confidentiality. No identifiable information is disclosed, and findings are interpreted with academic neutrality. The research prioritizes ethical reporting, respect for organizational privacy, and cultural sensitivity.

Methodological Overview

To visually represent the research process, the following model illustrates (Figure 2) how the study moved from literature to insight:



Source: Fig 2 Authors' analysis (2025)

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Drawing from the case of Jeff's cross-functional appointment to Assistant HR Manager, the findings reveal how managerial discretion, cultural sensitivity, strategic HR planning, and organizational agility converge to guide internal promotion decisions in the

Danish service sector. These findings are discussed below, along with theoretical reflections and links to existing literature.

Cross-Functional Talent as a Strategic HR Response

The first major finding is that cross-functional talent identification was not only considered acceptable but treated as a strategic necessity in the face of an unexpected managerial vacancy. After the resignation of the previous HR manager, Company R did not initiate an external hiring process or restrict its search within the HR department. Instead, leadership assessed existing talent pools across departments, ultimately identifying Jeff from procurement as a viable internal candidate based on interpersonal strengths, leadership potential, and organizational understanding.

This aligns with Boxall and Purcell's (2022) theory that strategic HRM must adapt to business exigencies by leveraging internal capabilities, especially in sectors where operational continuity is vital. In the service industry, as Yusriani et al. (2024) emphasize, success is driven by human interactions and responsiveness rather than rigid professional boundaries, making internal redeployment a practical and often necessary response.

Managerial Experience and Intuition in HR Decision-Making

A second and pivotal finding was that managerial experience and tacit knowledge played a central role in the decision to promote Jeff. Rather than relying exclusively on competency checklists or algorithmic assessments, the Vice Director used a combination of lived experience, familiarity with Jeff's leadership traits, and past performance observations to justify the appointment. This use of subjective judgment underscores the relevance of social learning theory in HRM, where observation and contextual knowledge significantly inform personnel development decisions (Gibson, 2004).

Moreover, in dynamic post-pandemic contexts, as Ben-Hador and Yitshaki (2025) note, organizational resilience is closely linked to leadership's ability to adaptively manage human resources under uncertainty. The strategic use of internal talent based on experiential insight rather than rigid credentials illustrates this resilience in action.

The Role of Organizational Climate and National Context

The case also revealed that Denmark's national work culture—marked by low power distance, trust-based leadership, and family-friendly policies—influenced the way the promotion was handled (Mahendra & Yusriani, 2025). Managers were expected to involve employees, communicate decisions transparently, and provide psychological safety throughout the transition. Jeff's appointment was presented not as a power move, but as an inclusive, developmental opportunity—consistent with the human-centered organizational culture described by Lepeley et al. (2021).

Denmark's organizational climate also demands alignment with employee well-being in this digital era, autonomy, and balanced workloads (Frone, 2003; Yusriani & Patiro, 2024). These expectations shape HR decision-making, especially in service sectors where team dynamics and morale directly affect performance.

Integration of Formal Planning with Leadership Flexibility

While Company R maintained formal HRP tools—succession charts, competency matrices, and role descriptions—these tools served more as support mechanisms than rigid mandates. The HR team used planning documentation to validate skill gaps and identify training needs but ultimately deferred to the Vice Director's strategic judgment.

This integration of formal systems with flexible leadership echoes the hybrid models discussed by Ulrich et al. (2010), who argue that modern HRM must combine data-driven planning with business-context awareness and real-time adaptation. Similarly, Creswell and Creswell (2017) highlight that qualitative inquiry reveals the informal but influential factors driving organizational decisions—such as trust, leadership credibility, and context-specific insight.

Training, Mentorship, and Development as Post-Promotion Strategy

Upon appointment, Jeff's skills gap in HR-specific areas was addressed through a structured post-promotion plan. This included rotational assignments, mentorship from senior HR professionals, and gradual increases in role complexity. These efforts ensured Jeff was not only promoted but supported in building capability.

Chong and Zainal (2024) explain that employee learning agility is critical to performance when roles shift dramatically, especially in digital and people-driven environments. Yusriani et al. (2024) add that the service sector's dependence on soft skills and customer proximity makes ongoing development an HR priority.

This step also illustrates that Company R's HRM strategy did not end with the decision—it extended into talent nurturing, reinforcing HR's role as an enabler of internal career progression.

Organizational Communication and Team Integration

Transparent communication accompanied the entire transition process. Leadership proactively explained the rationale behind Jeff's promotion to his new team and peers, ensuring alignment, managing expectations, and minimizing resistance.

Effective communication and employee involvement are known to mitigate organizational resistance during change (Sopandi et al., 2024). In Denmark's cooperative culture, this step is essential to maintaining psychological safety and sustaining engagement, particularly in flat organizational structures where informal norms are strong (Lepeley et al., 2021).

Broader Context: Post-COVID Workforce Shifts and Employee Agility

This case also aligns with broader, macro-level shifts in human resource management that were accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic. According to Bartusevičius et al. (2021), the psychological toll of the pandemic has eroded institutional trust, heightening the demand for transparent and human-centered leadership. The emphasis placed by Company R on communication, inclusion, and employee development directly responds to this paradigm shift.

Chopra and Sharma (2020), alongside Yusriani and Patiro (2024), emphasize that digitalization and hybrid work models have introduced a new demand for flexibility in workforce planning. In this environment, employee agility becomes critical. Chong and Zainal (2024) identify agility as a mediating factor between leadership strategy and performance outcomes. The willingness of internal candidates to step into new responsibilities under guided mentorship, as seen in Company R, exemplifies the kind of internal adaptability that service-sector firms increasingly need to cultivate (Karyono et al., 2023).

Discussion: Synthesis and Theoretical Implications

The case from Company R illustrates that strategic HR decision-making in service-sector environments is inherently non-linear, deeply people-oriented, and highly dependent on contextual factors. In responding to the central research question, it becomes evident that the organization's HR leadership did not follow rigid protocols. Instead, they executed a multi-layered strategic process, including:

- Scanning internal talent pools beyond traditional departmental boundaries
- Applying managerial discretion and leveraging social capital to assess readiness
- Embedding decisions within Denmark's egalitarian, human-centered workplace values
- Implementing structured post-promotion development and mentorship plans
- Ensuring transparent and inclusive communication of role transitions
- Responding adaptively to shifting employee expectations in the post-COVID context

This multifaceted approach reflects a human-centered, culturally aware HRM model that blends formal planning with tacit expertise, emotional intelligence, and long-term development vision. It confirms that effective workforce planning in the 21st century cannot

rely solely on structural frameworks. Instead, success emerges from a deliberate balance of systemization and subjectivity, data and empathy, readiness and relational trust.

As Theodorsson (2024) aptly states, "Without talent, success may be latent"—a reminder that any AI-driven strategy must place human capability, potential, and cultural alignment at its core.

Limitations of the Study

While this case study offers valuable insights into strategic HR decision-making, several limitations must be acknowledged:

First, this study is based on a single-case analysis within a specific cultural and industrial context—Company R in Denmark's service sector. While Denmark's emphasis on workplace equality and psychological safety shapes many HR practices, these conditions may not fully generalize to organizations in different countries or industries (Mahendra & Yusriani, 2025; Frone, 2003).

Second, the study draws primarily from interpretive analysis, managerial reflections, and internal documents. Although this qualitative approach allows for depth and context-rich understanding (Creswell & Creswell, 2017), it may limit external validity. Quantitative validation or broader cross-case comparisons would provide additional reliability.

Third, there is a reliance on managerial perspective. While the Vice Director's decision-making process was deeply explored, employee perceptions of fairness, readiness, and motivation—particularly from the HR team and Jeff himself—were not directly captured in this phase of the study.

Lastly, post-promotion outcomes such as long-term performance, retention, and leadership impact were not tracked. This makes it difficult to evaluate the full success of the strategic HR intervention beyond its implementation phase.

Future research may address these limitations by conducting longitudinal assessments, integrating employee voice, and applying mixed-methods approaches across diverse organizational contexts.

CONCLUSION

This study examined how strategic human resource planning and leadership experience intersect in the appointment of a managerial role from outside the traditional departmental structure. Using the case of Jeff's promotion to Assistant HR Manager at Company R, the research explored the real-world execution of cross-functional internal mobility.

The findings demonstrate that strategic HR planning, while supported by formal systems, is fundamentally shaped by organizational culture, leadership agility, and trust-based decision-making. In Denmark's service sector, where employee autonomy, fairness, and well-being are paramount, HR leaders must balance operational urgency with social sensitivity.

The case underscores that managerial experience and informal knowledge play a critical role in guiding talent decisions—especially in unpredictable environments shaped by post-COVID disruptions, workforce digitalization, and changing expectations for meaningful work. The promotion of Jeff, supported by training and communication, illustrates a best-practice model for inclusive and adaptive talent strategies.

Based on the findings, several practical recommendations can be made for HR leaders, particularly in the service sector and similar sociocultural contexts:

- Strengthen internal talent mapping by developing tools that identify cross-functional competencies, even among employees in non-core departments.
- Invest in leadership training that emphasizes interpretive judgment, empathy, and cultural awareness—critical for decision-making in flat, trust-based organizations.
- Formalize development plans for promoted employees from different backgrounds to ensure readiness and success post-transition.

- Enhance communication protocols during internal promotions to maintain transparency, motivation, and psychological safety.
- Apply a hybrid HR model, where formal planning supports but does not override leadership flexibility and lived experience.
- Integrate employee feedback mechanisms in future appointments to ensure holistic perspectives inform HR decisions.

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