“Think, Feel, Do” for HRD Budget Allocations: A Marketing Approach to Leverage HRD Persuasiveness.

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Abstract

Human Resource Development (HRD) initiatives are crucial for organizational growth and employee satisfaction. Nevertheless, securing budget allocations for HRD programmes can be challenging. This perspective paper critically suggests using the "Think, Feel, Do" (TFD) marketing framework to aid HRD professionals in bolstering their persuasiveness when advocating for budget allocations. Through comprehending how to captivate the cognitive (think), emotional (feel), and behavioural (do) reactions of budget holders to information, HRD professionals need to adopt a strategic and comprehensive approach to effectively convey the value proposition of their initiatives, thereby impacting the decision-making process of budget holders.

Keywords: Human Resource Development (HRD), HRD Budget Allocation, HRD Persuasiveness, “Think, Feel, Do” HRD approach.

Introduction

The prevailing body of Human Resource Development (HRD) research elucidates its capacity to facilitate the ongoing learning, advancement, and progression of employees by harmonizing their competencies and capabilities with the goals and aims of the organization (Dachner et al., 2021; Torraco and Lundgren, 2020). Scholars argue that HRD initiatives should be directly linked to organizational goals (e.g., enhancing employee performance, escalating productivity, nurturing innovation, or bolstering employee engagement) to render it more straightforward for financial decision-makers to discern the worth of allocating resources (Mitsakis, 2014; Anderson, 2009; Wognum, 2001). Given that HRD initiatives frequently necessitate substantial financial commitment, budget holders require reassurance that this outlay will result in favourable outcomes. Consequently, they must evaluate the expenses associated with HRD initiatives compared to the advantages they offer to the organization. To assuage their apprehensions, HRD professionals must articulate the anticipated results of their initiatives (e.g., heightened employee retention, diminished turnover costs, or enhanced competencies contributing to augmented productivity) and the expenses (including breakdowns and resources). This approach would exhibit the return on investment (ROI) of the HRD schemes, enabling financial decision-makers to make well-informed choices.

Additionally, prominent literature underscores the potential of HRD initiatives to provide enduring advantages, including heightened employee morale, talent acquisition, and organizational competitiveness through effective leadership and people management practices, especially during turbulent times (Bierema, 2020; Arora and Suri, 2020; Alagaraja et al., 2015). These efforts can also elevate employee output and efficiency and bolster employee engagement, satisfaction, and retention (Pass and Ridgway, 2022; Kundu and Gahlawat, 2015; Rana, 2014). Moreover, the essential function of HRD in succession planning, talent retention, and leadership cultivation, by ensuring a cadre of competent and skilled leaders to steer future progress and triumph, has been extensively documented (Nakamura et al., 2022; Nguyen et al., 2022; Gedro et al., 2020; Dirani et al., 2020). Therefore, it is extensively argued that the value proposition of HRD is rooted in its ability to unleash the workforce's full potential (Valentin, 2014; Mitsakis, 2014; Joo et al., 2014).

Investing in Human Resource Development (HRD) enables organizations to cultivate a climate of innovation, adaptability, and resilience, thereby maintaining competitiveness in rapidly changing market settings (Mitsakis, 2020). Primarily, HRD plays a crucial role in promoting a learning-oriented setting by providing ongoing training and development initiatives that encourage employees to embrace novel concepts and technologies. Secondly, HRD is responsible for nurturing transparent communication channels that facilitate the unrestricted exchange of ideas and feedback, fostering an environment conducive to innovation. Thirdly, HRD can introduce flexible work structures and empower employees to explore, adjust, and undertake calculated risks without fearing failure, enhancing adaptability. Lastly, HRD should precede initiatives promoting mental well-being and health to establish resilient teams capable of overcoming challenges. By incorporating these approaches, HRD can foster a culture where innovation, adaptability, and resilience become intrinsic principles, enabling organizations to survive and thrive in dynamic market conditions.

In essence, precise communication regarding the value proposition and risk mitigation capabilities of HRD is imperative in obtaining budgetary allocations from organizational budget holders. Through alignment with organizational objectives, showcasing return on investment, risk mitigation, cost-benefit analysis, and active involvement of budget authorities, HRD practitioners can present a convincing argument for investing in their programs. Effective communication also encourages cooperation and ensures the successful execution of HRD initiatives. By analyzing the aspects above from a financial or human resources theoretical standpoint, HRD professionals can utilize the "Think, Feel, Do" (TFD) marketing framework to secure their organizational budget authorities' approval effectively.

Application of the "Think, Feel, Do" Marketing Framework for HRD Budget Allocations

A marketing strategic approach known as the "Think, Feel, Do" (TFD) framework is employed by marketers to gain insights into and impact consumer behaviour (Rehman et al., 2014; Bruce et al., 2012; Idorenyin et al., 2011). It recognizes that consumer choices are not solely based on reason but are also shaped by feelings and perceptions (Verhagen and Bloemers, 2018). Consequently, this article proposes a way for HRD professionals to utilize this framework to improve their ability to persuade budget holders through stimulating their cognitive involvement (think), emotional resonance (feel), and encouraging action (do).

Firstly, within the marketing domain, the "Think" element pertains to the logical facet of consumer behaviour. Marketers endeavour to impact consumers' cognitive functions by offering information and data and reasoned arguments regarding their offerings. For example, when contemplating a vehicle purchase, consumers might deliberate on fuel efficiency, safety features, and pricing. Marketers deploy methods such as advertising, product showcases, and comparison matrices to convey these rational attributes to consumers. To capture the attention of budget holders and stimulate their interest in HRD initiatives, HRD professionals should effectively showcase their programs' potential advantages and relevance. Hence, aligning with the marketing viewpoint of the TFD framework, we posit that HRD professionals must actively engage budget holders cognitively by furnishing them with precise, coherent, and fact-based details on aligning HRD programs with the organizational objectives and strategies. Providing specific instances of how HRD initiatives have effectively tackled analogous challenges in the past can additionally spark the curiosity and involvement of budget holders. To accomplish this, they are tasked with conducting comprehensive research to amass data and figures demonstrating the positive effects of their HRD initiatives on organizational efficacy, such as increased productivity, increased employee committemnt, and diminished turnover rates. HRD professionals must also put forth compelling rationale showcasing how investing in employee growth contributes to the organisation's enduring success, highlighting enhanced employee output, augmented retention, and bolstered organizational competitiveness. By further outlining the potential Return on Investment (ROI) and elucidating how HRD initiatives aid in attaining strategic goals, budget holders can be incentivized to prioritize budget allocations for HRD endeavours. Therefore, leveraging strategic communication platforms, such as presentations, reports, and data visualization tools, is imperative to effectively communicate intricate information and construct a persuasive argument for HRD budgetary provisions.

However, the "Feel" aspect acknowledges that emotions significantly influence consumer decisions. Marketers utilize emotional appeals to establish positive connections with their brands. Emotional branding techniques, such as storytelling, humour, or nostalgia, elicit specific consumer emotions, moulding their perceptions of a product or service. For instance, advertising often emphasizes themes of joy and unity, intending to evoke positive emotions and engage consumers on a deeper level than just the product itself. From a Human Resource Development (HRD) perspective, alongside appealing to the rational thinking of budget holders, HRD professionals must also cultivate an emotional bond by fostering a shared sense of purpose and dedication to personal and organizational growth. Therefore, we contend that HRD professionals should present arguments that resonate with budget holders personally by underscoring the tangible impact of HRD initiatives on individual employees' personal and professional advancement, such as increased job satisfaction, career progression opportunities, and personal and organizational growth. One effective method of establishing an emotional connection is through storytelling and customization. HRD professionals can showcase real-life success stories of employees or organizations that have reaped benefits from HRD initiatives. These narratives should spotlight how HRD has revolutionized employees' careers, enhanced their competencies, elevated their quality of life, and contributed to upholding the organization's values and mission to improve its competitiveness. In summary, establishing an emotional bond with stakeholders regarding HRD programs entails utilizing customization by emphasizing personal growth prospects, aligning initiatives with organizational values, utilizing diverse communication platforms, assessing and communicating outcomes, and seeking input for ongoing enhancement. Through adopting these approaches, HRD professionals can effectively communicate the practical implications of HRD initiatives on individual employees' personal and professional growth, fostering increased engagement, backing, and dedication from budget holders.

Finally, considering a marketing perspective, the "Do" element underscores the significance of influencing consumer behaviours. Marketers aim to stimulate desired actions, like purchasing a product or service. This phase frequently includes calls-to-action (CTAs) that motivate consumers to progress in the buying process. Instances of these include "Purchase Now," "Enrol Today," or "Limited Time Offer," which instil a feeling of urgency and elicit immediate responses from consumers. In the context of human resource development (HRD), we posit that HRD professionals must employ a strategic approach to convince financial decision-makers to assign resources for HRD initiatives. This necessitates highlighting the value proposition of such investments while underscoring the consequences of neglecting employee development. HRD professionals should coordinate their proposals for budget allotments with the organization's strategic goals. By illustrating how HRD initiatives directly contribute to achieving crucial performance metrics like enhanced productivity, innovation, and talent retention, financial decision-makers are more likely to recognize these investments as imperative for organizational prosperity.

HRD professionals are tasked with delivering precise and implementable suggestions for budget distribution by estimating Return on Investment (ROI) in their HRD schemes. This task includes quantifying potential advantages stemming from employee growth projects, such as decreased turnover expenses, enhanced employee efficiency, attraction of high-calibre talent, promotion of an innovative environment, and increased competitive edge for the organization. By elucidating how the ROI of HRD schemes contributes to a sustainable competitive advantage, HRD professionals can ensure that budget overseers comprehend the concrete value of investing in HRD, thereby constructing a persuasive argument for budget allocations (i.e., the actions of budget holders).

HRD professionals need to instil a sense of immediacy by outlining the hazards of neglecting investments in employee development. These hazards might encompass possible adverse effects on employee satisfaction, output, and retention and the danger of lagging behind competitors who prioritize HRD. By underscoring the repercussions of inactivity, HRD professionals can prompt budget overseers to assign resources for HRD schemes as a proactive strategy to mitigate these risks.

To summarize, encouraging budget holders to assign resources for HRD schemes necessitates HRD professionals to provide precise and implementable suggestions, underscore the hazards of disregarding HRD investments, and highlight the competitive advantages acquired by organizations prioritizing employee development. By aligning HRD objectives with organizational aims, presenting ROI estimations, and showcasing success stories, HRD professionals can effectively advocate for budget allocations that bolster the long-term progress and triumph of the organization.

The TFD framework offers HRD professionals a tool to effectively convey the importance of their HRD initiatives to organizational budget holders to secure budget allocations. By engaging budget holders cognitively through data-driven insights, establishing emotional connections via impactful success stories, and encouraging action through clear recommendations and solutions, HRD professionals can illustrate the concrete advantages of investing in employee development and gain backing for their initiatives. Nevertheless, from a marketing perspective, the TFD framework simplifies the intricate nature of consumer decision-making by segmenting it into three separate phases. In contrast, in reality, these phases are often interconnected, leading consumer behaviour to be shaped by a multitude of factors beyond mere cognition, emotion, and action. Nonetheless, within the realms of business and HRD, the adoption of the TFD framework has the potential to aid in comprehending and influencing budget holders' decision-making processes by addressing their cognitive functions, emotions, and behaviours, thereby empowering HRD professionals to craft more holistic and impactful HRD strategies that resonate with organizational stakeholders.

With all that in mind, the paper's suggestions can be metaphorically and graphically illustrated as the handshake of two stakeholders, the HRD professionals and the budget holders, when both think alike (fig. 1).

[Figure 1 goes here]

Directions for future research

The "Think, Feel, Do" marketing framework could be further discussed and operationalised in HRD research. Future studies would benefit from empirically applying and testing the TFD framework in organizations of different kinds, including a range of organizational stakeholders, to further develop the HRD "Think, Feel, Do" Handshake conceptual framework.

Additionally, future studies could contribute to the HRD discipline and field of research by operationalising related marketing models, such as the "Attract, Interest, Desire, and Action" (AIDA) or the "Reach, Act, Covert, Engage" (RACE), to suggest how these could help HRD professionals strategically position their departments in their organizations. This would expand HRD's critical thinking and research into different perspectives and thus strengthen its strategic positioning in organisations by demonstrating its theoretical interdisciplinary focus and practical interdepartmental understanding.

Disclosure statement

The author reports no potential conflict of interest.

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Appendix

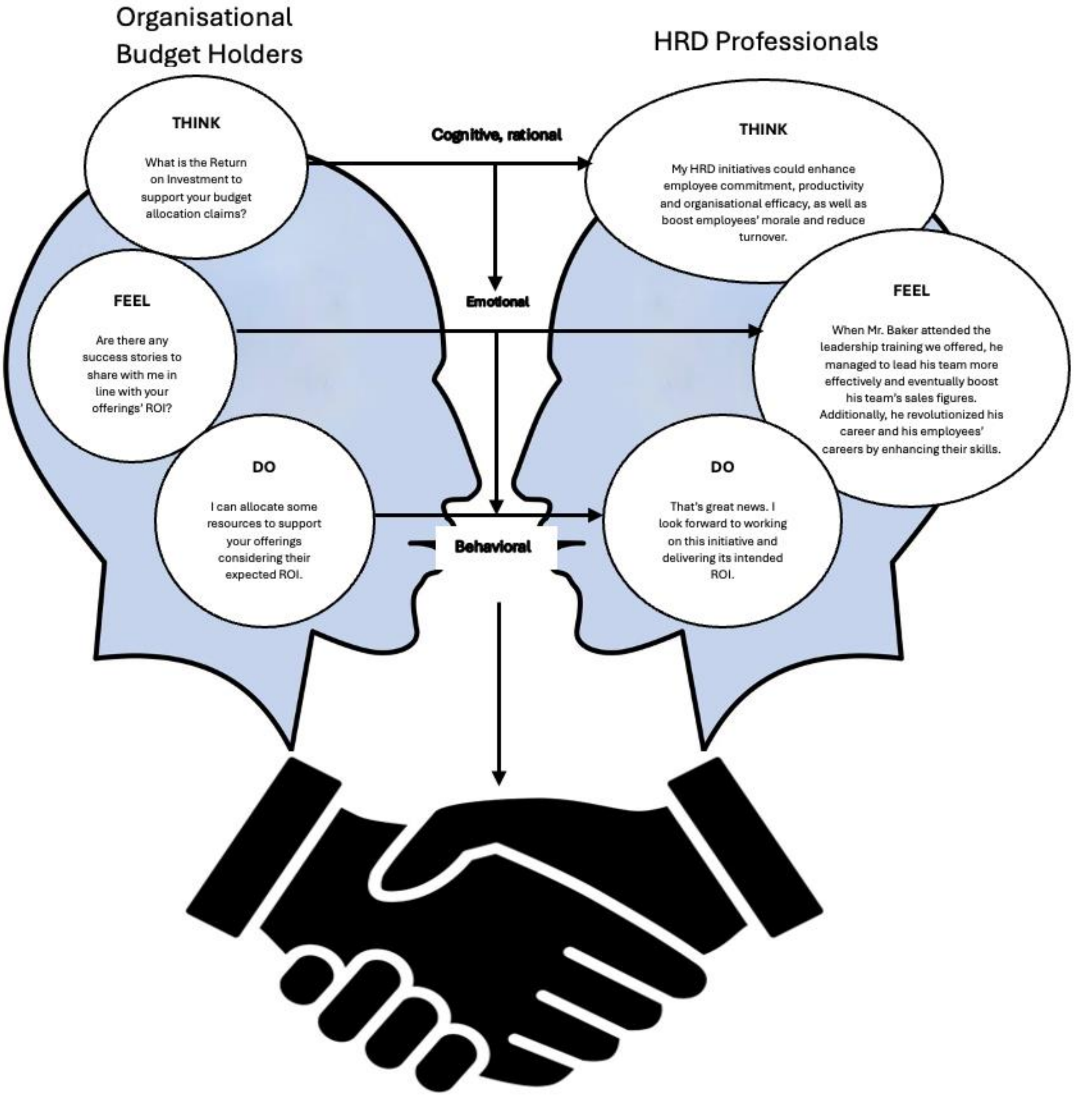

Figure 1: The HRD "Think, Feel, Do" Handshake for Budget Allocations.