

Meridian Airlines - Digital HR Systems and Strategic Workforce Planning

IB-style trimester assessment worksheet - Higher Level

Level	Higher Level	Suggested time	60 minutes
Total marks	40	Assessment format	MCQ, short answer, case study, extended response
Topic focus	strategic HRM, analytics, line management, succession planning, change management	Command terms	identify, define, explain, assess, evaluate

Instructions

- Answer all questions.
- Use business management terminology and apply your answer to the case where relevant.
- The answer key and marking guidance are included at the end of this worksheet.

Section A - Multiple choice [6]

1. Strategic HRM differs from traditional personnel administration mainly because it: [1]
 - A. links people decisions to long-term business strategy
 - B. focuses only on wages and contracts
 - C. removes the need for training
 - D. is used only in public-sector organizations
2. Which action best supports succession planning? [1]
 - A. filling all leadership roles from outside the business
 - B. identifying high-potential employees and preparing them for promotion
 - C. stopping all staff appraisals
 - D. treating training as a non-essential cost
3. A digital HR dashboard is most useful when it helps managers to: [1]
 - A. track workforce data and make better staffing decisions
 - B. avoid speaking to employees
 - C. guarantee zero labour turnover
 - D. ignore operational performance

4. A likely risk of line managers having greater appraisal responsibility is that: [1]
 A. feedback quality may vary across departments
 B. no performance data can ever be collected
 C. HR policies become illegal
 D. employees no longer need motivation
5. A rise in internal promotions is usually a sign that a firm is: [1]
 A. building talent pipelines and reducing dependence on external hiring
 B. cutting all development spending
 C. outsourcing every process
 D. reducing organizational learning
6. Employee resistance to a digital HR system is most likely when staff fear: [1]
 A. higher-quality information
 B. greater monitoring or changing routines
 C. better training records
 D. improved scheduling accuracy

Section B - Short answer [10]

7. Define strategic human resource management. [2]
8. Explain how a digital HR system can support workforce planning in a large international business. [4]
9. Discuss one advantage and one limitation of giving line managers more responsibility for performance appraisal. [4]

Section C - Data response / case study [14]

Meridian expands the use of HR analytics

After the first year of digitization, Meridian Airlines is considering a second phase. Management wants to add workforce analytics tools that predict absence risk, flag training gaps, and compare team productivity across airports. Some union representatives support better planning but worry that the new dashboards may lead to unfair pressure on staff.

Indicator	Before digitization	After year 1
Average time to process roster changes	40 hours	18 hours
Mandatory compliance training completion	82%	96%
Supervisory roles filled internally	41%	64%
Annual voluntary employee turnover	18%	13%

10. Using the data, calculate the percentage reduction in average time to process roster changes. Show your working. [4]

11. Explain one likely effect of HR digitization on service quality and managerial control, using the data. [5]

12. Assess one risk to Meridian of relying too heavily on digital performance dashboards. [5]

Section D - Extended response [10]

13. Evaluate whether Meridian should prioritize further investment in workforce analytics or in leadership development as the next stage of its HR strategy. [10]

Answer key and marking guidance

Teacher note: Answers are indicative rather than exhaustive. Reward any relevant business management reasoning that is accurate, applied to the case where appropriate, and within the mark limit.

Section A

Q	Ans	Rationale
1	A	Strategic HRM aligns workforce decisions with broader organizational objectives.
2	B	Succession planning builds internal capability for future leadership roles.
3	A	Data dashboards improve visibility of skills, performance, and workforce trends.
4	A	Line-manager involvement can improve relevance but may create inconsistency.
5	A	Higher internal promotion often indicates stronger development and succession planning.
6	B	Resistance often arises from uncertainty, surveillance concerns, or unfamiliar workflows.

Section B

Q7 [2 marks]

Indicative answer

- Strategic HRM is the management of people in ways that directly support long-term organizational objectives.

- It aligns recruitment, development, reward, and performance systems with business strategy.

Marking guidance Award 1 mark for people management and 1 mark for the strategic alignment element.

Q8 [4 marks]

Indicative answer

- A digital HR system can centralize data on staffing levels, training completion, skills, and performance across locations.

- This improves visibility of current workforce capability and future gaps.
- Managers can respond more quickly to shortages, compliance issues, or scheduling pressures.
- In a multinational or multi-site firm, standardised data can also improve coordination and consistency.

Marking guidance Award up to 4 marks for one well-developed explanation with clear strategic linkage.

Q9 [4 marks]

Indicative answer

- One advantage is that line managers understand daily performance and operational context, so their feedback may be more relevant and timely.
- This can improve coaching and identify development needs faster.
- One limitation is that appraisal quality may differ between managers or departments.
- Bias, weak training, or inconsistent standards can reduce fairness and comparability.

Marking guidance Award up to 4 marks for a balanced discussion covering one advantage and one limitation.

Section C

Q10 [4 marks]

Indicative answer

- Change in hours = $40 - 18 = 22$ hours.
- Percentage reduction = $22 / 40 \times 100$.
- Percentage reduction = 55%.
- This suggests substantially faster administrative processing.

Marking guidance Award 1 mark for correct change, 1 mark for correct method, 1 mark for the correct answer of 55%, and 1 mark for interpretation.

Q11 [5 marks]

Indicative answer

- Faster roster processing and higher training completion mean managers can deploy qualified staff more effectively.
- This should improve operational control because staffing decisions are based on better information.
- Higher compliance completion from 82% to 96% also lowers the risk of unqualified or outdated practice.
- Service quality may improve if staffing gaps are reduced and supervisors are better prepared.
- The fall in turnover from 18% to 13% may also support continuity and customer experience.

Marking guidance Award up to 5 marks for one well-developed explanation with clear use of case data.

Q12 [5 marks]

Indicative answer

- Dashboards may encourage managers to focus too narrowly on measurable indicators rather than judgement or context.

- Employees may feel over-monitored, which can damage trust and morale.
- If data are interpreted without understanding local conditions, some teams could be judged unfairly.
- This may increase resistance from unions or staff and reduce cooperation with the system.
- Therefore, analytics can improve control, but only if combined with fair human judgement.

Marking guidance Award up to 5 marks for a balanced assessment of one significant risk.

Section D

Q13 [10 marks]

Indicative answer

- Further analytics investment could improve forecasting, scheduling, absence management, and consistency across locations.
- The first phase already reduced roster processing time and improved training completion, suggesting technology can deliver measurable gains.
- Leadership development may produce more durable benefits in motivation, coaching quality, culture, and succession planning.
- The rise in internal promotions suggests development spending is also working.
- Overemphasis on analytics could create concerns about surveillance or overly mechanical decision-making.
- Overemphasis on leadership training alone may leave data and coordination weaknesses unresolved in a large airline.
- A strong judgement may support sequencing or balancing the two investments according to strategic urgency and budget.

Marking guidance Reward balanced evaluation using the data and stakeholder concerns in the case. Strong answers should weigh measurable control gains against human and cultural factors before reaching a justified judgement.

Band	Descriptor
1-3	Limited knowledge or unsupported assertions; little application to the case.
4-6	Reasonable understanding and some analysis, though depth or balance is inconsistent.
7-8	Good analysis with clear application to the case and some evaluation.
9-10	Balanced, well-supported evaluation with a clear justified judgement.