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OUTSOURCING HUMAN RESOURCES: A PRACTICAL VIEW

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Internship Report
Master in Management

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Bibliographic Note

Sofia Ribeiro Conde was born in Porto and is 23 years old. She started her bachelor degree in Management at the Faculty of Economics of the University of Porto in 2014 and finished it in 2017 when she promptly enrolled the Master in Management in the same faculty, which she is currently close to completing.

During her bachelor degree, she was part of a student association called EXUP in which she was a member and the director of the International Relations department. She was in charge of welcoming and accompanying foreign students and involved in various internal projects.

Currently, she is working at the company where her internship took place in the Human Resources Consulting area.

Abstract

This report was prepared as part of the completion of the Master in Management course at the Faculty of Economics of the University of Porto. This internship report aims to describe the activities related to the core business of a Consulting company in Human Resource Management where the internship was carried out. Firstly, a theoretical framework is presented concerning the themes developed in the three main projects conducted throughout the internship: Reverse Mentoring Programme, Customer Service Model and Assessment and Development Center. Following, the topics of Human Resources Outsourcing and Human Resources Consulting are referred to as they frame these activities. In addition, a description of the company and the internship will be provided concerning the main services and activities. Finally, the main relevant projects will be addressed, described and discussed. The conclusion presents a reflection of the internship and the projects as well as a SWOT Analysis on the use of Human Resources Outsourcing and Consulting.

Keywords: Human Resources Outsourcing, Human Resources Consulting, Human Resources, Reverse Mentoring, Customer Service Model, Assessment Center

JEL-codes: O15

Resumo

Este relatório foi elaborado como parte da conclusão do curso de Mestrado em Gestão da Faculdade de Economia da Universidade do Porto. Este documento tem como objetivo descrever o estágio efetuado e os projetos ligados ao negócio principal da empresa de Consultoria de Recursos Humanos. Nesse sentido, primeiramente será apresentado um enquadramento teórico referente aos temas desenvolvidos nos três principais projetos conduzidos ao longo do estágio: Programa de Reverse Mentoring, Modelo de Atendimento ao Cliente e Assessment Center, além dos temas de Outsourcing e Consultoria de Recursos Humanos que enquadram estes projetos. Além disso, é fornecida uma descrição da empresa e do estágio. Por fim, são descritos e discutidos os três projetos mais relevantes executados durante o estágio. Na conclusão, apresenta-se uma reflexão e discussão do estágio e dos projetos, bem como uma Análise SWOT sobre o uso da Consultoria de Recursos Humanos.

Palavras-chave: Outsourcing de Recursos Humanos, Consultoria de Recursos Humanos, Recursos Humanos, Reverse Mentoring, Modelo de Atendimento ao Cliente, Assessment Center

Códigos JEL: O15

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1. Introduction

1.1. Internship Overview

The internship that originated this report took place during the 2nd year of the Master in Management, and according to the Regulation of Curricular Internships of the Faculty of Economics of Porto, it aims to develop and articulate the training obtained by students in the Master. According to this Regulation, a curricular internship serves to gain experience in a real context, facilitating integration into the labor market. The internship ends with the discussion of an internship report that contains a theoretical reflection of the activities developed during the internship.

Concerning this internship, it came on the intern initiative, through direct contact with the company after a summer internship. The internship protocol portraits an agreement between three parties: a representative of the company, a representative of the Faculty of Economics of Porto - Professor Luísa Pinto and lastly, the intern. The duration of the internship is also stipulated so this internship officially began on September 3, 2018, ending on April 30, 2019.

The internship took place at a Human Resources (HR) Consulting company located in Porto, whose name is kept anonymous to ascertain the required confidentiality.

The main objective of the internship was to participate in as many activities and projects as possible, gaining practical knowledge of the world of Consulting and Human Resources. It made possible the active participation in several projects, with full autonomy and a significant impact as is herein described.

1.2. Main Internship Tasks

The internship involved the execution of several daily activities and active involvement in HR projects, such as:

Elaboration of Commercial Proposals: Elaboration or revision of commercial proposals based on the information given by the clients according to their needs and the possible solutions the company could offer. This intervention provided: (1) a wider understanding of how HR consulting companies can answer and solve some organizational problems; (2) which tools are used and how; and (3) which are the most effective.

Training and Development: Training and Development are "a set of planned learnings, designed to result in the development and continuous change of attitudes, skills and knowledge indispensable for the performance of activities inherent to the function of each individual" (Caetano et al., 2014, p. 130).

At this company, the design and delivery of training and development programs in themes like leadership, time management, communication, customer service, mentoring, and so on, are tailored to different sectors of activity and work areas according to the needs of the organization with DGERT certification (Direção Geral do Emprego e das Relações de Trabalho). The internship tasks involved designing the training content, supporting the delivery and executing training analysis and executive summary preparation to provide improvements and recommendations to the client.

Assessment and Development Centers: Assessment Centers are "a method of evaluating the performance of a candidate in a set of techniques where at least one of them is a simulation" (Thornton & Rupp, 2004, p. 319). In an assessment through actual simulation/ situational exercises, one can understand the competencies and behaviors of each individual assessed. At this company these programs are tailored to customer need. During the project the main tasks were the implementation of assessment tools, such as interviews, business cases, observation in context, as well as subsequent elaboration of evaluation reports. The main purpose is to help clients make the right talent decisions throughout the employee lifecycle, including creating an employer brand, attracting talent, identifying high potential employees, making adequate promotion decisions, creating a succession pipeline and developing leaders. This tool was used during the internship in a trainee and a job promotion assessment.

1.3. Framework of the Report

Currently, organizations live under constant pressure and face an increasingly complex environment. The globalization and the development of a knowledge-based economy prompt companies constant transformation motivated by the reality they are facing and, consequently, organizational change, as well as technological and competitive adaptation, arising from globalization (Stefano et al., 2006). Within this changing perspective, organizations have been forced to resort to and create organizational strategies and practices that allow for competitive advantage in the labor market. Specifically, there is a need for Human Resource Management (HRM) to support these organizational changes. Human Resource Management has undergone major changes, moving from a purely operational approach to an increasingly strategic one (Tamkin et al., 1997).

In the '70s and '80s, the Strategic Human Resources Management model emerges, revolutionizing all the concepts defended around Human Resources Management (Mota & Cordeiro, 2015)

In the 1990s, a major phenomenon inducing major changes in the business environment, globalization. Verifying the need for a more strategic Human Resources Management, so as to have as a factor of competitive advantage, the people of the organization (Marques, 2010).

The more strategic thinking of this phase required organizations to have a new way of designing more strategic policies and practices (Fischer, 2002). The importance of knowledge transmission among the different employees of the company begins to gain more emphasis.

In addition to this, there is a greater appreciation of people and the Human Resources department because they are the main actors in the changes that were taking place that could guarantee an effective process.

More emphasis is being given to the generalist and strategic view of human resources in the face of constant updates, fostering the development of Human Capital (Fidelis & Banov, 2006).

Nowadays, with the constant need for organizational change and its adaptability to competitive markets, People Management has assumed a position as a planner and agent of change due to the fact that organizations are increasingly competitive, requiring employees to be increasingly prepared and involved in the organization in response to growing organizational competitiveness (Dessler, 2007).

To help in this mission Human Resource outsourcing and consulting companies are having a strong impact on the development of human talent.

People management needed outsourcing and consulting as the Human Resources area moved from technical-bureaucratic to human and developmental, for non-core activities like Recruitment and Selection, Training and Development, Careers and Salaries processes, among others.

Thus, the need for change in processes and organizational systems has significantly expanded the importance of outsourcing and consulting for the area of Human Resources. Technological evolution and the emphasis on quality were also aspects that contributed to the consulting activities to be perceived as strategic actions, which enabled the improvement of People Management and organizational development (Leite et al., 2009).

According to Corbett (2004), outsourcing began in the 1970s even though it only became a trend for Human Resources Management later.

Outsourcing became more known in the late 2000s as one of the most important trends in HR management (Ordanini & Silvestri, 2008) and was a sign of the qualitative reorganization of work due to the rising IT solutions that had started to be applied. This growth in IT and related high-tech industries led to a rising understanding that finding and retaining the best individuals was not something as easy as before (Appelbaum & Batt, 1994).

For Cunha (2008), the term outsourcing was initially confused with simple subcontracting, focusing only on low value-added activities and away from the core business of each company. However, due to increased market competitiveness, companies were forced to focus their best resources on their core business. This created opportunities to outsource less critical activities, functions or processes.

Outsourcing began to be used on a large scale (Belcourt, 2006), in activities that until then were only done internally, such as Human Resources (Lievens & De Corte, 2008). Nowadays outsourcing has been one of the most used tools in restructuring management models (Belcourt, 2006).

The business environment is increasingly concerned with the issue of competitiveness between organizations. They have to reinvent and reinforce their current operations with new ideas all the time (Ok, 2011). Due to this growing need, the outsourcing market has grown rapidly and now there are several suppliers that can be hired to meet the numerous and different needs of companies (Lilly et al., 2005)

1.4. Structure of the Report

This report is divided into three parts. The first part consists of a review of the literature on Human Resources Outsourcing and Consulting and the topics covered in each project, starting with two internal talent development, inside-out projects, Reverse Mentoring and Assessment Center and finishing with an outside-in project, Customer Service Model. The following is a description of the company where the curricular internship took place and the projects developed throughout it. These inside-out and outside-in concepts derive from the way the organization approaches its strategy. In this case, the first is to develop human capital internally in order to gain competitive advantage abroad and the second is to study the market beforehand to define the best strategy (Cunha et al., 2015).

Finally, there is a discussion of the activities developed and conclusion of the report.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Human Resources Outsourcing

In order to understand the core business of the company where the curricular internship was carried out, Human Resources Consulting, we should first understand what Human Resources Outsourcing is.

The following table presents the definitions of outsourcing according to several authors.

Author	Definition
McIvor (2005, p. 7)	Outsourcing is the external sourcing of products and services previously produced internally and which may lead to the transfer of some activities associated with a particular function to the external organization while others are maintained.
Harland et al. (2005, p. 832)	Outsourcing is seen as the acquisition of something that was originally produced internally or could have been internally produced, even though there was a decision to produce externally.
Holcomb and Hitt (2007, p. 466)	Outsourcing is defined as an organized procedure which appears when organizations trust in intermediary markets to provide more specific capabilities that will complement the existing ones along the organization's value chain.

Author	Definition
Page et al. (2010, p. 5)	Outsourcing involves hiring a specific organizational function or activity from an external, independent organization, rather than performing those tasks within the organization, whether or not these tasks have already been internal.
Kalaignanam & Varadarajan (2012, pp. 348-349)	Outsourcing is the practice of hiring an outside organization to perform an activity that was previously done internally. The outsourced activity may be in any area and of any kind. This term is generally only used when referring to activities that were previously done internally, and not those that are traditionally performed by entities outside the organization.

Table 1 - Definition of Outsourcing

Source: Own elaboration

Therefore, we will use as the definition of Outsourcing, the definition given by Page et al. (2010, p. 5) since it refers to the same points as the other definitions but does not limit the type of activities that can be outsourced. Outsourcing consists of an organization hiring an external entity, as opposed to using resources from within the organization, to perform an activity previously performed internally or not (Page et al., 2010, p. 5).

Usually, this choice involves passing on to an outside company what are not the core competencies of an organization (Gidrón & Rueda, 1998). Core competencies are understood as those that define what the organization is, while non-core competencies are only business support (Prahalad & Hamel, 1990, pp. 85-86).

Outsourcing Advantages

The advantages of outsourcing are many, according to McIvor (2005), greater collaboration between two different entities in the development of a particular product and/ or service can create tacit knowledge, which is a highly personal resource, very difficult to pass and share (Bustinza et al., 2010), and the creation of this knowledge can serve as a source for innovation, representing a possibility of differentiation in terms of competitive advantage. In addition, outsourcing brings flexibility to the organization, enabling it to streamline its responsiveness, resource utilization, at the right amount and at the right time (Corbett, 2004; McIvor, 2005). According to Corbett (Corbett, 2004), the fact that companies want to reduce this type of costs is related to the investment of this saving in other types of activities, such as the restructuring of core areas in companies. Additionally, it is a way for an organization to have access to skills, resources, usually more specialized than those it has internally. These competencies represent a potential source of quality for the organization's products and/ or services, a source of innovation and, as a result, can increase business performance (Corbett, 2004; McIvor, 2005; Page et al., 2010).

In turn, Guimarães and Crespo (2013) associate outsourcing with the possibility of risk reduction, whatever they may be.

Outsourcing Risks

Like any process outsourcing also presents its risks. The first risk that can occur is in the wrong determination of which core competencies are the source of competitive advantage and hence the loss of competences (Corbett, 2004; Harland et al. 2005; Kumari, 2013).

This idea is reinforced by Quinn and Hilmer (1995) who states that an organization to maintain its competitive advantage must invest in the activities that constitute its core competence, and outsource the others. This loss of skills can ultimately lead to the loss of the organization's innovation capabilities (McIvor, 2005).

In addition, it may also lead to workers' discontent at the fear of losing their jobs which may lead to their poorer performance (Corbett, 2004; Liapopoulos & Moschuris, 2013). According to Raiborn et al. (2009), employees do not understand why the company prefers to "hire" rather than "do", which is one of the dilemmas that often raises the demotivation of internal employees.

Another disadvantage is that sometimes the company may lose control of the process as the process is the responsibility of another company and there is sometimes a loss of industrial property rights, loss of data confidentiality and even a decrease in product or service quality (Jain & Natarajan, 2011; Rosebush et al., 2012).

In addition, another disadvantage of outsourcing is that sometimes the cost of providing services is higher than initially expected due to increased transaction costs, possible resolution costs or damages (Bahli & Rivard, 2003; Liapopoulos & Moschuris, 2013).

Finally, another issue that often arises is the distance between organizations and markets, both geographically and culturally, which can lead to increased costs due to decreased transactions (McCormick, 2011; Liapopoulos & Moschuris, 2013).

In the case of the Human Resources area, outsourcing happens when a company hires a company specialized in Human Resources to perform certain activities in this specific area (Greer et al., 1999).

According to Belcourt (2006), the functions / activities of the Human Resources department that are most likely to be performed through outsourcing are: salary processing, training, recruitment and selection and benefit management, in other words, the activities related with administrative aspects can be performed by people outside the company.

Successful human resource outsourcing is only possible when there is a quality partnership between the two companies involved that ensures trust between them (Abdul Halim et al., 2014).

2.2. Human Resources Consulting

Outsourcing led to the appearance of Consulting, which according to Orlickas (1999), consists of the provision of a certain service by a qualified and remunerated professional through diagnostics and processes, with the purpose of raising organizational needs, indicating solutions, recommend actions, effectively implement and monitor them. Another definition, not far from this one was given by Kubr (2002), for whom Consulting is an independent professional service that helps managers and organizations to achieve their objectives not only by resolving problems, but also by identifying opportunities, learning and implementing solutions.

The concept of Consulting is broad in the literature, however, it is possible to observe a relationship between the concepts, regarding its conception as a partnership activity between the organization and a professional able to guide, generate changes and develop solutions capable of add value to the organization (Biech, 2019, p. 3). It is a process through which a client and a provider establish a support relationship as a professional or Consulting service in which the client (organization) presents a need and the provider (Consulting company) with specialized professionals helps to solve the needs, developing ideas that meet the requirements of said problem (Biech, 2019, p. 3).

Consulting industry has growth steadily in the last decades (Sturdy, 2011). In these past few years the Consulting area has been growing in terms of turnover (+7,8%) and in terms of employment (+5,2%) as seen in the figure below.

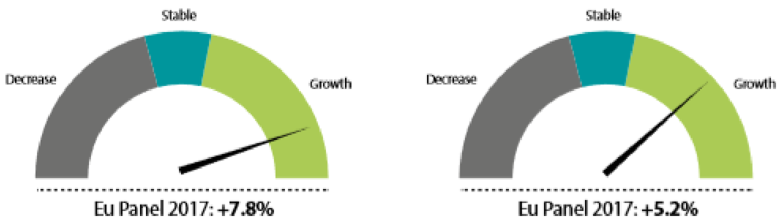

Figure 1 - Consulting Industry Growth

Source: FEACO, 2018

Consulting services have traditionally been divided into four groups: strategy, human resources, operations and information technologies (Gross & Poor, 2008). This report focuses Human Resource Consulting since it was the activity developed in the internship.

In the Human Resources area consulting aims at advising and guiding operational assistance in the strategy, policies, practices and procedures in the human resource area of an organization (INE, 2013).

Human Resource Consulting is a wider concept that can be defined as the "activities that support organisations in dealing with the effects that change has on the human element of the organisation (Change Management), which also includes Human Resource (HR) Consulting, targeting the improvement of the 'people' element of an organisation through HR strategies, performance measurement, benefits, compensations and retirement schemes, talent development programmes and executive coaching" (FEACO, 2018, p. 20).

This definition claims that Human Resources Consulting companies have a wide range of intervention strategies in several processes of a company. Some of those processes, particularly the ones developed in the internship are outlined below.

2.3. Outsourcing Human Resources Processes

Keeping in mind the advantages of outsourcing some human resource activities related to talent development programmes or change management, as referred by the FEACO report (2018), as some of the most common activities now performed by Human Resources Consulting companies, some types of activities were further explained in a theoretical point of view. These activities were Reverse Mentoring, Assessment Center and Customer Service Model, this last one, although it is not directly a Human Resources matter, is intrinsically connected to Employee Engagement.

2.3.1 Reverse Mentoring

Organizations are becoming more and more concerned in developing their employees. For this they are using mentoring which is becoming a popular tool with the rising number of formal mentoring programs implemented (Wanberg et al., 2003).

Mentoring can be defined as a relationship established between a senior and experienced person, who has the role of mentor, and a junior one, the mentee, to support the development of skills (Allen & Eby, 2007, p. 93). This type of relationship usually originates in a professional context, but can be transposed to other areas. Usually, in a company with a formal mentoring program, access is open to the participation of all those who have the requirements defined in the program and the mentor-mentee relationship is clarified, objectives are established and results are measured.

The fact is that executives realized that knowledge is not a one-way road. It is in everyone's interest to share knowledge (Greengard, 2002) and, with the present generation changes they have been experiencing in their workforce they felt the need of doing something about it. Every twenty years, a new generation appears and although this is something normal, what is happening currently with the appearance of the millenials has been more impactful than ever (Fry, 2015).

This new generation changes jobs faster than ever before changing the rate of urgency of implementation of retention strategies (Ertas, 2015).

What employers figured out is that affective commitment can be a very effective way of retaining these employees (Meyer & Allen, 1991) which is one of the reasons why mentoring appears more now in the organizations. It has been proven that mentoring can effectively increase the affective commitment of an employee (Hechl, 2017) which shows the benefit of this kind of programme to a company.

Since this new generation is growing up in a technological world and use technology all the time, a new concept of mentoring appeared, the concept of reverse mentoring, which first appeared in business when top managers felt the need to learn about the internet from younger employees (Greengard, 2002). This concept continues to exist in the business world as a development tool that allows spreading technological skills or generational perspectives throughout the entire organization (Murphy, 2012).

According to Murphy (2012), Reverse Mentoring is an innovative tool that encourages learning and facilitates intergenerational relationships. It involves the match between a younger and junior employee who acts as a mentor who shares his or her knowledge with an older and senior colleague who will be the mentee. The goal is to share knowledge with the mentee whose purpose is to learn about more current issues that the mentor has mastered or even technological and generational perspective issues. In addition, this tool also enables the development of mentor leadership. According to Brito et al. (2017), reverse mentoring happens when it is a younger employee who teaches and passes on new learning to older employees. This type of mentoring enables older employees to be encouraged while keeping young people committed to helping others to make progress, thus enabling the development of intergenerational relationships (Anitha & Chandrasekar, 2017).

Although reverse mentoring programs work in the opposite way of the traditional mentoring programs both parties can benefit from this relationship (Baily, 2009) since it encourages mutual support and knowledge sharing from both the older and the younger (Spreitzer, 2006).

As with most workplace initiatives, promoting good Reverse Mentoring relationships requires planning and careful attention (Murphy, 2012, p. 566). According to Broder-Singer (2011), mentoring programs are extremely difficult to design and implement. Well thought out program objectives functions/activities essential for each of its phases, as mentoring has different needs and requires different competencies in each of them (Tjan, 2011).

Another variable to consider when building mentoring programs is the organizational complexity itself. Broder-Singer (2011) supports the idea that nowadays organizations work with multidisciplinary teams to provide more flexible business strategies and equally flexible processes by recalling that overly structured mentoring programs and rigid interpersonal relationships may tend not to stand out. The more dynamic the formal mentoring relationships are, the more successful they should be in terms of support, participant satisfaction and effectiveness (Murphy, 2012, p. 566).

In the specific case of a Reverse Mentoring program, Murphy (2012) identifies the practical implications that are essential to its creation:

Practical Implication	Explanation
Leadership Support	Reverse Mentoring initiatives require clear support from executive leadership. Lack of this support is consistently considered as a problem by participants in mentoring programs (Ehrich et al., 2004).
Matching Process	According to Allen et al. (2006) and Ragins et al. (2000) research shows that it is important for participants to feel that they had some input to the matching of the mentor and mentee.
Training and Development	It is critical for enhancing the competence of mentors who have no mentoring experience and for the mentees to understand the challenges of this inverted role. Training can help participants initiate their mentor-mentee relationship and understand their roles, responsibilities and expectations (Parise & Forret, 2008).
Use of Technology	Social technologies and networks are increasingly used at both personal and professional levels, employees of all generations must be technically skilled in their workplace. According to Allen et al. (2006) and Janasz et al. (2008) the use of virtual platforms in mentoring show that technology can have a positive impact on the progress and management of mentoring interactions.

Table 2 - Practical Implications of a Reverse Mentoring Program

Source: Murphy (2012, p. 567-568)

2.3.2 Assessment Center

Nowadays with the increase of the number of possible employees along with shifting of the worker-employer laboral relations generates an additional pressure on HR to develop tools that will empower organizations with bigger strengths in recruiting, selecting, training and retaining the best talents available. The increased diversity in the available personnel and the high importance of meeting the terms of the different employment laws makes it important that these HR instruments are both *perceived as fair* by the candidates and/or employees, and *actually be fair*, meaning with no biases (Thornton & Rupp, 2006, pp. 3-4).

Thornton & Rupp (2006) believe that the continuous nature changing of jobs themselves creates additional challenges for the organizations. On one side, organizations need to be able to measure the essential attributes to accomplish success in these jobs, that includes flexibility, willingness, drive to learn, acculturation, as well as other characteristics that are hard to outline, quantify and improve. On the other side, the consecutive globalization of business and technological advances that allowed a remote business to emerge has led into the creation of business structures requiring HR tools compatible, that is, remote, portable, flexible and secure. Summarizing, changes in the organization's environments have modified the needs for different HRM tools and the correspondent attitudes of applicants and employees about these tools, reflecting also the need for different organizations to make bigger efforts in developing, validating and administering HRM practices, using the best tools (Thornton & Rupp, 2006). Given these challenges, organizations need to be sure they are choosing, retaining and developing the best talents for their companies, hence the use of assessment centers.

Assessment Center Definition

An Assessment Center is "a standardized evaluation of behavior based on multiple inputs. Any single assessment center consists of multiple components, which include behavioral simulation exercises, within which multiple trained assessors observe and record behaviors, classify them according to the behavioral constructs of interest, and (either individually or collectively) rate (either individual or pooled) behaviors" (Hoffman et al., 2015, p. 6).

Assessment Centers originally appeared in World War II to select officers. Since then, it has been recognized as a tool in Human Resource Management, particularly in decision-making, as it allows individuals to be assessed by observing their behavior (Sangi, 2007).

Considered as a method to aid selection and development, its purpose is to observe behaviors using exercises and simulations that enable the presence of competences or potential competencies that lead to high performance (Sanghi, 2007).

This instrument diagnoses weaknesses and strengths (Lievens & Thornton, 2017) through various tests, estimating the level of adaptation to a given function, consisting of a standardized assessment of behaviors that are based on various inputs (Seegers and Thomton, 2009).

It is relevant that behavioral observations are made by various observers and that they have helped design the exercises for an unbiased assessment (Seegers & Thomton, 2009).

At the end of the exercise, the evaluators make an analysis of their observation ratings for each dimension of competencies.

The analyzes of each observer should be discussed and grouped resulting, thus, the performance evaluation of the evaluated in the competences/dimensions that the AC measures (Seegers & Thomton, 2009).

Assessment Centers are one of the most analytical methodologies using a wide range of diagnostic tools: (1) assessment of competencies defined according to what is intended to be assessed; (2) assessment of competencies defined according to what is intended to be assessed; (3) assessment of functional levels; (4) individual, peer and group work scenarios; (5) standard exercises and (6) role plays from the actual work context.

They are commonly used to support decisions in the selection, promotion, succession and development of employees.

The Assessment Centers are a tool that has been used for about 50 years and has a proven validity in various areas in selection and development processes (Lievens & Thornton, 2017).

In the specific case of selection, this is one of the most effective tools because it allows observing and qualifying the performance of each candidate in the exercise simulations in a company context and identifies the individuals with the most potential in relation to the desired competencies and behaviors profile (Annen, 2017).

Advantages of an Assessment Center in a Selection Process

An Assessment Center allows having an objective evaluation of a candidate both individually and when compared to the group due to the use of different evaluators with access to the same evaluation tools.

Furthermore, it allows great proximity to situations of the real context due to the creation of exercises that realistically simulate what will be asked of them in this position, making it possible to understand for each individual what performance they may have in the function in question.

Finally, it allows you to reduce the cost and risk inherent to a selection process as it leads to a more informed selection of the candidates.

These advantages are only fully realized when the Assessment Centers are developed, implemented and evaluated according to what they were actually asked for. The choice of behaviors and skills to be evaluated should be made consciously as they must be something that can be observed and evaluated (Annen, 2017).

2.3.3 Customer Service Model

To be able to offer positive and striking emotion to the Customer, the employees must be highly committed to the organization.

Employee engagement is described as an affirmative, satisfying work-related feeling that translates to vigour, dedication and absorption (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2010). This engagement consists of how workers experience their work and how they perceive it as something that gives them energy, that stimulates them and is meaningful (Bakker et al., 2008).

Engagement and satisfaction are not the same. Employee engagement is not only about what the company does for the worker, but it is also about what the worker does for the company. However employee satisfaction is an essential condition for employee engagement (Bellani et al., 2018)

According to Bakker (2009), throughout the times, research has revealed that engaged employees are highly enthusiastic, self-efficacious individuals whose way of working influences other positive events in their lives.

If we consider this employee engagement as a way of living, engagement is noted for its relationships with many positive outcomes (Bakker et al., 2011). One of the most obvious (perhaps more even for the organizations) is that a positive engagement led to a better performance in work (Demerouti & Cropanzano, 2010). Engaged employees are likely to invest their resources in excess in their own job performance: both in-role and extra-role performance (Halbesleben et al., 2009).

In previous studies, it was consistently shown that job and personal resources facilitate engagement (Bakker & Leiter, 2010). Job resources consist of any social, physical, or organizational aspect of the work that may reduce its demands, allowing or creating conditions to achieve goals or personal growth (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007).

Giving the employee the ability to learn new skills will drive learning and possibly increase job experience or for example, social support gives the employee the feeling of belonging to something (Bakker et al., 2011).

Employee engagement is connected to significant business results at a scale that is very relevant to many organizations (Harter et al., 2002). Actually, according to Winkler et al. (2012) employee engagement has more impact on business results than the opposite.

Engaged employees think, feel and act in ways that reflect high levels of commitment to the company.

"A positive employee experience can contribute to the higher motivation to apply extra effort at work and go 'above and beyond' typical job responsibilities." (IBM, 2018, p. 5).

Customer satisfaction can be connected to employee engagement in a positive way (Chi & Gursoy, 2009) but although employee engagement is the starting point, developing quality in the relationship between customer and company is also something very important and evidenced by the proliferation of studies on relational marketing and the number of companies that invest in customer retention and in building customer loyalty strategies (Richards & Jones, 2008; Palmatier et al., 2006). Relational marketing stresses customer satisfaction and customer retention as long-term value for the company (Vavra, 1992). Ma et al. (2008) also stresses that the essential basis of relational marketing is the development and maintenance of long-term customer relationships, achieved through the creation of superior customer value and customer satisfaction.

Actually, the relational marketing strategy focuses on long-term customer loyalty (Chaston et al., 2000; Ravald & Gronroos, 1996) so it is essential that the company ensures that it delivers on its promises, enhances the core product, adds services that the customer appreciates, and implements loyalty programs. These programs attempt to create direct, personalized customer relationships that encourage customer affective involvement and commitment to the company and then customer loyalty (Sanzo & Vásquez, 2011).

The Retail Customer

Pine and Gilmore (1998) argue that retail organizations cannot compete through prices and products because they are easily replicable. In this case, the factor that must be taken into account is the degree of customer satisfaction. The higher this is, the more likely the consumer will be to visit the retailer again (Burns & Neisner, 2006).

Customer satisfaction in retail can be more easily achieved by improving service quality. Quality of service is measured by core product attributes such as store layout (product layout, clean environment and clear signage), store location and existing processes (booking time, additional services, delivery time and variety also by other services, such as the existence of a loyalty card (Ciavolino & Dahlgaard, 2007).

Therefore it is essential to invest on the customer experience in retail. This encompasses the whole experience in terms of demand, purchase, consumption and after-sales service. Thus, the experience may involve multiple channels (Verhoef et al., 2009).

To better understand Customer experience, Buttle & Maklan (2015) suggest a number of methods as can be seen in Table 3.

Method	Explanation
Mystery Shopper	Recruitment of Mystery Shoppers to report buying experience with the company.
Experience Mapping	Map and improve everything that happens to Customer at touch points via focus groups or questionnaires.
Process Mapping	Conducting graphical demonstrations of business processes.
Customer Activity Cycle	Describe the process Customers go through until they reach the purchase decision.
Ethnographic Methods	Observation of the customer experience.

Table 3 - Methods to Gain Insights on Customer Experience

Source: Buttle & Maklan (2015)

Customer insight is essential to creating a consistent experience across all activities and to create a successful Customer Service Model.

Customer Centricity

Today, the market is increasingly aware of the need to focus more on customer-related factors such as customer satisfaction, customer service, customer experience and customer loyalty. According to Shah et al. (2006), customer-centricity is putting the customer in the middle of the organization's operation, that is, all decisions must start with a customer focus and opportunities for improvement that can be induced to the customer.

Customer centrality helps identify opportunities for building a competitive advantage based on increasing customer satisfaction and is a sustainable approach and not easy for competitors to fight against (Shah et al., 2006). Therefore, customer-centric organizations have a greater advantage in identifying changing customer needs. In the 21st-century customer, centralization becomes a necessary condition for companies to achieve a successful position in the existing market and ensure customer satisfaction (Shah et al., 2006).

Customer Satisfaction

Kotler et al. (2015) define satisfaction as "a sense of personal pleasure or disappointment of the result by comparing the product with the expectations". According to Singh (2006), one of the main drivers of organizational success is the management focus on the needs and wants of customers. These are basic criteria for centralizing the organization in the customer, which positively influence customer satisfaction. For this very reason, many researchers stress the importance of customer satisfaction, which induces customer loyalty and loyalty and also the basic criteria for centralizing Customer Service Model Restructuring for specialized retailer organization at Customer, which positively influence customer satisfaction (Singh, 2006).

3. Internship

3.1. Characterization of the Company

The company where the internship took place is a Human Resources Consulting company. This company resulted from the acquisition of a Consulting company that was one of the main players in the market in terms of communication, change and transformation, talent management, technology and gamification in the area of Human Resources in Portugal by the Portuguese subsidiary of a multinational company of Human Resources Consulting.

Their purpose was to bring to the market a unique offer in Consulting. With this operation the two companies had the objective of complementing their services and teams in order to fill the areas in which their line of business was less strong. The result was the delivery of a unique offer to customers by bringing together the best of these two Consulting companies.

This integration was aligned with the growing needs of customers seeking more complete and integrated solutions that address their increasingly complex issues. The various partnerships made prior to the acquisition, the success achieved and the relationships that were created led to this operation and made it a natural process that met the expectations of both parties (Company Report, 2018).

On the other hand, this acquisition had the purpose of increasing not only the operation in Portugal but in countries where both companies, the acquiring and the subsidiary, had operations.

The acquiring company has an influence on the lives of more than 110 million people, promoting their well-being, investments and career. The business is based on creating safer and more rewarding futures - whether in terms of health plans, pension plans, investment strategies or alignment of profiles according to the needs of organizations. By developing studies and analysis as agents of change, the company anticipates and understands the individual impact of business decisions, now and in the future.

During the internship, it was allowed the participation in several projects. For the three main projects a more elaborate description can be seen below. The projects presented do not always follow the same structure and methodology since the company believes that each client deserves a personalized approach.

3.2. Reverse Mentoring Program

3.2.1 Scope and Purpose of the Project

This project started in 2018 when a customer – a retail company - asked for a Reverse Mentoring Programme. The project continues until September 2019 and has been closely monitored by the team the intern integrated. Reverse Mentoring was an initiative created to bring together senior executives and young talents, in which the latter are mentors of the first, on topics such as technology, communication tools, social networks, current trends and insight into internal issues.

This program was designed to build bridges between generations: it promotes intergenerational learning by enabling the transformation of a one-way interaction to a two-way learning process. In addition, the current context requires senior executives to become increasingly fluent in the digital world, and young mentors can offer new ways of looking at problems, learning, and developing ideas. To increase the interactivity of the project and ease the communication of the participants an App and a Web Platform were developed containing all the useful information and communication channels. The main steps of the conception of the program are presented following.

3.2.2 Project Steps

The main project steps are: (1) target identification; (2) communication; (3) registration; (4) selection; (5) launch; (6) ongoing promotion and (7) evaluation and conclusion. Each step is detailed as follows.

Target Identification

The first step of this project consisted of identifying the target for mentors and mentees. In the figure below we can find the identified universe of participants, their expected profile and themes of interest for the mentoring.

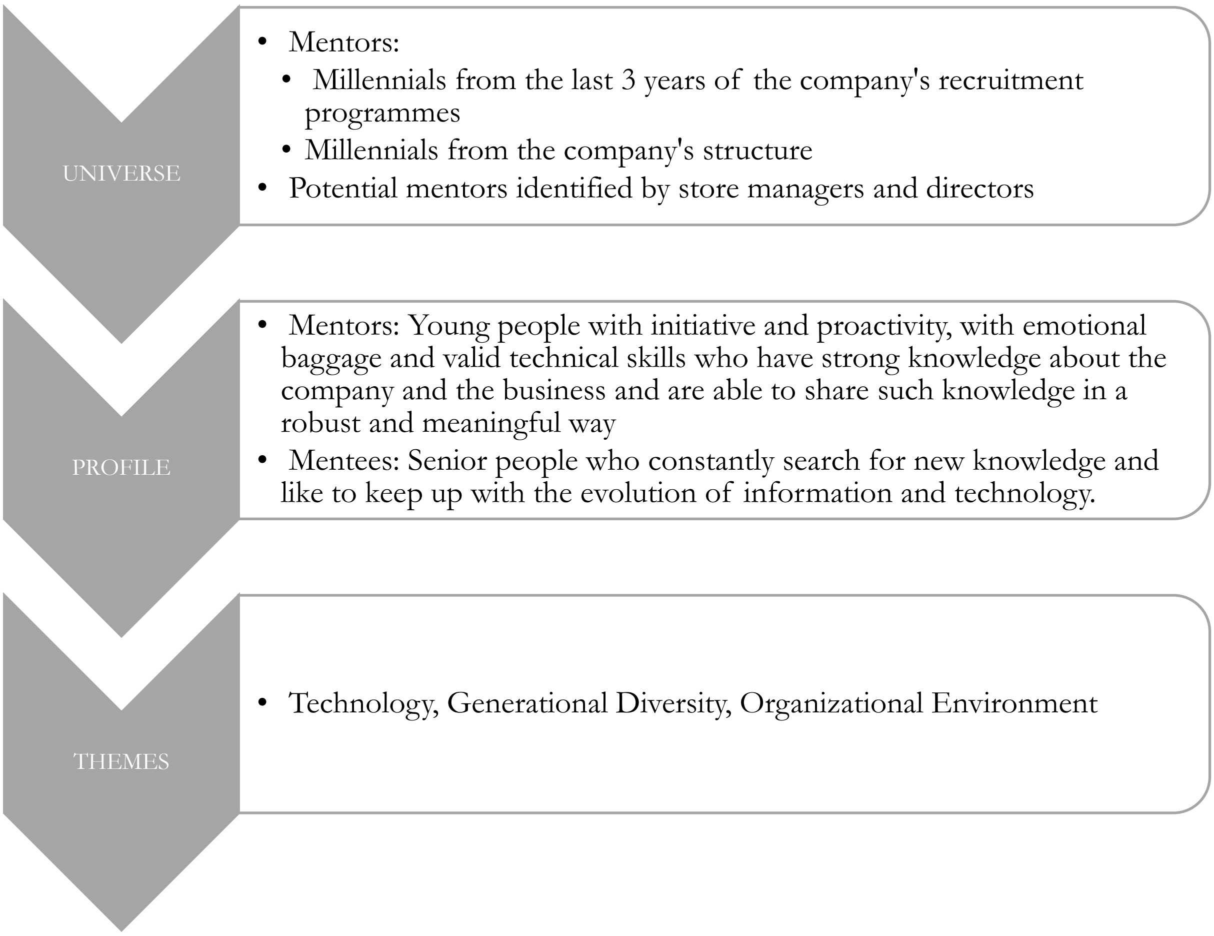

Figure 2 - Target of the Project

Source: Own elaboration

Communication

This action involves the communication of the project to the participants as well as the presentation of the main information and includes two distinct steps: (1) the sending of an e-mail about the initiative with a specific focus on the chosen audience, with a brief explanation of the program sponsored by the top of the organization, explaining the value proposition of the participation (namely the visibility that it will allow regarding the higher hierarchies) and an email to Managers | Store managers with a brief explanation of the program and detailing on the desired profile of the mentors to identify potential program mentors in the different areas. This first communication sends the participants to a registration page where they reveal their intention to participate; (2) the Managers | Store managers send an e-mail to the potential candidates with brief a explanation of the program, sponsored by the top of the organization, explaining the value proposition of the participation (namely the visibility that it will allow regarding the higher hierarchies).

Simultaneously to these steps, a communication kit was created with: (1) Powerpoint with a presentation of the program to the teams; (2) Flyer to present at meetings, clarifying the opportunity this program represents; (3) Brochure with the general explanation of the program and value proposition; (4) Poster with the link where they can find the explanation of the program and the page of registration.

Registration

During this step of the project, all stakeholders had direct access to a registration platform where not only they could confirm the availability and interest in participating, but also register in the main areas they felt they could contribute most as mentors. These areas were: (1) technology, which included social media, communication tools, collaboration tools and useful applications; (2) generational diversity, which included feedback and communication, wellness and balance, ways to learn and consumer trends; (3) organizational environment, which included leadership, motivation, time management and workplace.

For each category, candidates had to give 1 to 5 stars to list the level of proficiency they believed to have on the subject and justify their level of proficiency by responding to the following:

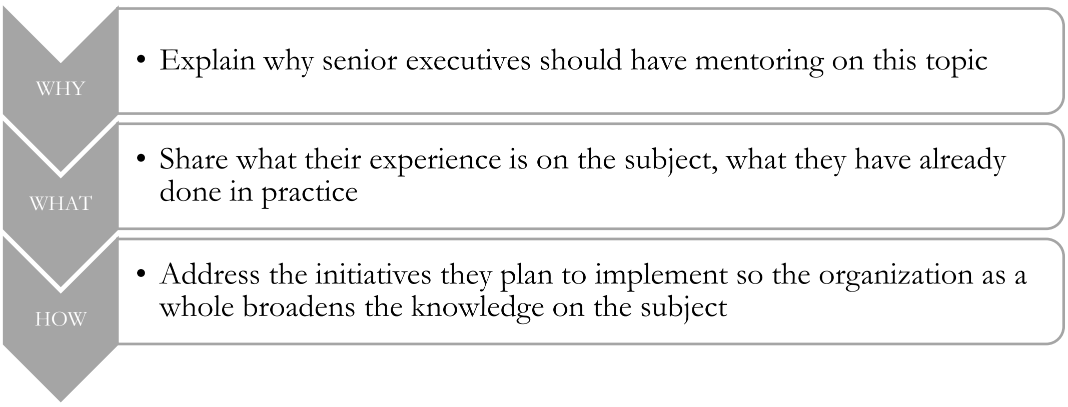

Figure 3 - Justification of the Level of Proficiency

Source: Own elaboration

Selection

In this step, according to the online registrations, it was possible to make a screening based on the following criteria organization of candidates by the level of proficiency, within each category, candidates will be ordered based on the number of stars they gave and the relevance of the justification for them. Due to this ranking, 100 to 150 Mentors will be listed for the program.

Mentor – Mentee Attribution

This was the step where each mentee communicated to the HR area the 3 main categories for which they would like to receive Mentoring and based on this identification an assignment of 3 Mentors was made for each Mentee. Such identification was given on the basis of proficiency level and profile fit of both parties. In addition to the 3 Mentors, Mentees could have Mentors for specific themes. In these cases, Mentees would have to go to the Web Platform or the App and search for the specific theme for which they desired mentoring (See Annex A and B).

Launch

On this step both mentees and mentors received an informative email with an infographic video explaining: (1) the basic structure of the Reverse Mentoring Program and timings; (2) how to download the app and how to use the app and the web platform; (3) explanation on what are the roles as mentor and mentee and (4) explanation on how the assignment of mentors and mentees was made.

In addition to the video, in the email, the Mentees learned about their 3 Mentors and their contacts in the App and Web Platform. Mentors already knew who their Mentee would be.

In the launch phase, both the team responsible for the project and the company's HR area were available for questions and support with the installation and use of the App and Web Platform.

Ongoing Promotion

From this phase on, the contact was established by the prefered channel of both mentor and mentee, and the mentoring process was initiated (based on mentor expertise and knowledge). This process had to meet some basic requirements: (1) the process lasts one year, starting in September 2018 and ending on September 2019 and (2) the process is facilitated by the support of the app and the web platform, which will allow mentor search for specific topics (in addition to the top 3 Mentors) based on the categories, request contact or question submission directly through the app (See Annex C), ensure interaction registration between mentee and mentor and send notifications to both in order to encourage contacts, knowledge sharing, etc.

During the duration of the program, the Mentees must have at least 3 meetings with each of the Mentors (the format of the meeting varies greatly according to the choice of both, and maybe face-to-face, technology tool, video call). Mentees and Mentors should preferably have message exchanges (with tips, updates, information) with a minimum monthly frequency.

Once started the process, through the App | Web Platform, the following initiatives were carried out to promote the Program: (1) encourage mentors to share tips and knowledge every two months on their profile so that mentees can gain access to relevant knowledge about trends and useful information and can refine their choice of mentors based on this proactivity; (2) send notifications to mentor and mentee pairs every three months so they remember to schedule all 3 meetings within a year; (3) once every two months, a ranking of the top five topics most covered in terms of categories and send notifications to suggest that Mentees and Mentors exchange messages and information on the topic; (4) for each internal initiative of the company send notifications to ask mentors evaluation from 0 to 10 (10 being the highest) for how much they believe the initiative was valid and one justification field and text feedback.

Throughout this phase the HR area had the role of monitoring and facilitating the process as well as giving possible support in the use of the App., ensuring that it continues as planned and achieving the objectives.

Evaluation and Conclusion

This last step will come when the Program reaches a year in duration.

For this phase, both Mentees and Mentors will receive a link to fill out an Online Program Balance Survey in which they will evaluate both the structure of the program and the performance of their Mentee / Mentor which were the greatest learning they have had, what suggestions they would give, and areas for inspiring story-telling.

Furthermore, as a way to close the Program, in the beginning of October 2019 a one-day lecture and networking session will be held with the following initiatives: (1) share of online survey results; (2) mentees and mentors will be invited to present inspiring stories; (3) referenced mentors will give lectures on the top 3 categories of the year and (4) moment of celebration of the initiative.

3.2.3 Expected Outcomes

The expected outcomes for the project stakeholders can be identified for the mentor, the mentee and the organization, as summarized in Table 4.

Mentor	Mentee	Organization
Networking reinforcement	Gain knowledge of technological themes and new trends	Increased equity and diversity
Accelerating the development of critical professional and personal skills to support leadership in its challenges	Greater perception about the way of being and being of the new generations and their vision about the moment, strategies and initiatives of the organization	Suppression of technological gaps
Greater business knowledge and strategic vision	Development of interpersonal skills focused on intergenerational communication	Reinforcing intergenerational relations
Increased motivation, engagement and recognition		Positive impact on the retention of young talent and motivation of both the public involved
Reinforcing exposure and visibility		Cultural transformation through two-way learning

Table 4 - Expected Outcomes for Stakeholders (Mentor, Mentee and Organization)

Source: Own elaboration

3.3. Assessment Center

To assess the competencies of a trainee group for a retail company we built an Assessment Center, which consists of using methods and tools to assess an individual's competencies, abilities and behaviors, allowing the Organization to make more sustained decisions about their individuals. It also supports adequate individual feedback and the design of customized development plans.

3.3.1 Scope and Purpose of the Project

This project was developed to support the selection of candidates for a retail company and consisted on: (1) identifying which areas/ competencies that needed to be acknowledged throughout the assessment in order to ensure the future sustainability of the business; (2) defining an assessment process to decide if the candidates had the identified profile and (3) providing critical inputs for the final selection.

3.3.2 Project Steps

Regarding the methodology for the development of this project, we consider there should be three key intervention steps: (1) set-up; (2) assessment day and (3) output delivery which will be further explained next.

Set-Up

This first step consisted on: (1) defining the project's detailed schedule and its milestones; (2) defining the project governance model; (3) validating the evaluation moments to be considered in the assessment process and the eventual adjustments to be made; (4) defining and validating the observation lenses matrix and (5) analysing the individual report output and check if there is need for any adjustment.

For this to be possible we had working sessions with the project's team, analysis work of information of the company and a posterior validation by the project's team, which resulted in: (1) the alignment with the project team's goals and expectations; (2) a scheduled project; (3) a model of governance and (4) validated and adapted observation lenses.

Assessment Day

This phase consisted on the application of online questionnaires and face to face assessment moments, starting with an experimental approach that was dynamic and absorbing enough to appeal to the participant's emotional involvement in challenging situations, allowing the observation of more natural behaviors and, consequently, maximizing the reliability of the process.

This gave the possibility to the participants to reflect, analyze and question their behaviors, based on a vision that goes beyond their perspective, motivations and beliefs about themselves and about how they behave. It challenged them to elasticize their behavior thus increasing their potential for adjustment to the various situations they would face in the position they were applying for.

In terms of the Assessment Center methodology, the observation lenses used were: **(1) MBTI – personality assessment**, which is a personality test that allows the person to deepen the knowledge about their own personality and about their behavioral preferences. The personality assessment was done through an online questionnaire, testing a person's preferences in four different perspectives (Myers, 1987). With this questionnaire, it was possible to identify the main characteristics of the participant's behavioral type, which were then be discussed in an interview context; **(2) self-assessment questionnaire**, which allowed understanding the participant's perception about him(her)self, through his/her answers to certain questions and situations designed according to the reality and competencies under analysis. This is a tool that allowed us to understand the beliefs and convictions that each person had about themselves and to confront at the end of the assessment process with the outputs of the other evaluation sources; **(3) role play**, this lens consisted of performing a simulation dynamic in which the candidate would participate in a meeting, where he was being asked to take on a particular role and our consultant would take the other. This meeting simulated a particular episode of everyday life (e.g. resolution of a conflict between an employee and a manager, implementation of a new process in the organization or other situation). Throughout the dynamic, some surprise factors could be introduced (e.g., the posture of the assessor changes, the phone rings, someone enters the room) and the participant would have to deal with them; **(4) interview**, which consisted of a two-hour personal interview conducted by a consultant. This interview aimed to be an intimate moment of sharing and reflection. It was a powerful knowledge tool for the participant as an individual and a moment when, not only, several dimensions of himself were addressed, but also of the company; **(5) group challenge**, which was a tool for understanding how participants acted as a team. Simulation of situations involving complexity, ambiguity, uncertainty, volatility and change allowed to observe the reaction of each element to these environments. This observation lens enabled to understand decision making, leadership, and communication skills in situations of increased tension and interaction with other stakeholders and finally, **(6) business case**, a dynamic that intends simulate the real-world competitive contexts by putting individuals in front of scenarios or decisions. Participants were challenged to make business decisions in a risk-free environment, which allowed them to experience the problems, reflect on best practices and test the solutions they could use to enhance key performance indicators for teams and the organization.

Output Delivery

This last phase consisted on delivering the information collected on each participant to the company through several types of outputs such as: (1) individual reports, which we produced for each participant containing the participants' identification, the identified differentiating characteristics, the strong points, development areas and their impacts, the participants' competencies profile with critical evidence and the general conclusions and recommendations; (2) database, an aggregating database with the results obtained by the participants in the different instruments during the assessment, as well as some previously parameterized analysis like participants' results by competence, results segmented by lenses, skills and drivers' global average, participants' global ranking and an individual quantitative report per participant and lastly (3) global report, which consolidated the main indicators presented in each individual report and included information such as ranking of participants, aggregated results of the participants' competencies, MBTI consolidated information on the main conclusions obtained through the report, in particular, the style of profiles of candidates and which implications these profiles had, self-assessment analysis of the results from these observation lenses, consolidated with comments and recommendations for action and recommendations on the global organization and choosing of the participants.

3.3.3 Expected Outcomes

The expected outcomes for the project stakeholders can be identified for the candidate and the organization, as summarized in Table 5.

Candidate	Organization
Promotion of greater self-knowledge and self-awareness	Comprehensive diagnosis of the candidates based on relevant HR analytics, that will allow finding talent spots and key organizational and individual development needs
Increased motivation and engagement since the beginning as they feel more valued and that the company invests on them with this type of initiatives	More appropriate and realistic workforce planning
Previous knowledge of what will be asked of them in a certain position since	Leadership and critical functions' succession continually assured by the right people

Candidate	Organization
they were put through simulations of the real contexts	
	More structured and efficient career management
	Recruitment of individuals with greater functional and organizational fit

Table 5 - Expected Outcomes for Stakeholders (Candidate and Organization)

Source: Own elaboration

3.4. Customer Service Model

3.4.1 Scope and Purpose of the Project

This project appeared due to the necessity a retail company felt to review their Customer Service Model regarding their new positioning in the market. The project lasted approximately 6 months and included not only the conception of the model itself but also the training with the customer assistants.

Customer service should communicate the brand concept and build customer experience. Everything around us shows that the consumer has changed, so it is mandatory to evolve in the way we relate to it. Service, through the different channels and people representing an organization with the customer, has the power to positively influence and inspire.

The purpose of this project was to review and update the Customer Service Model (physical in-store attendance), in line with the new brand concept, communicate the Service Model to the Management team and give them the capacities to better implement it and strengthen the engagement of employees (and, in turn, customers).

Thus, it was essential to ensure that the three factors that most impact employee engagement by having initiatives that promote it as seen in the figure below:

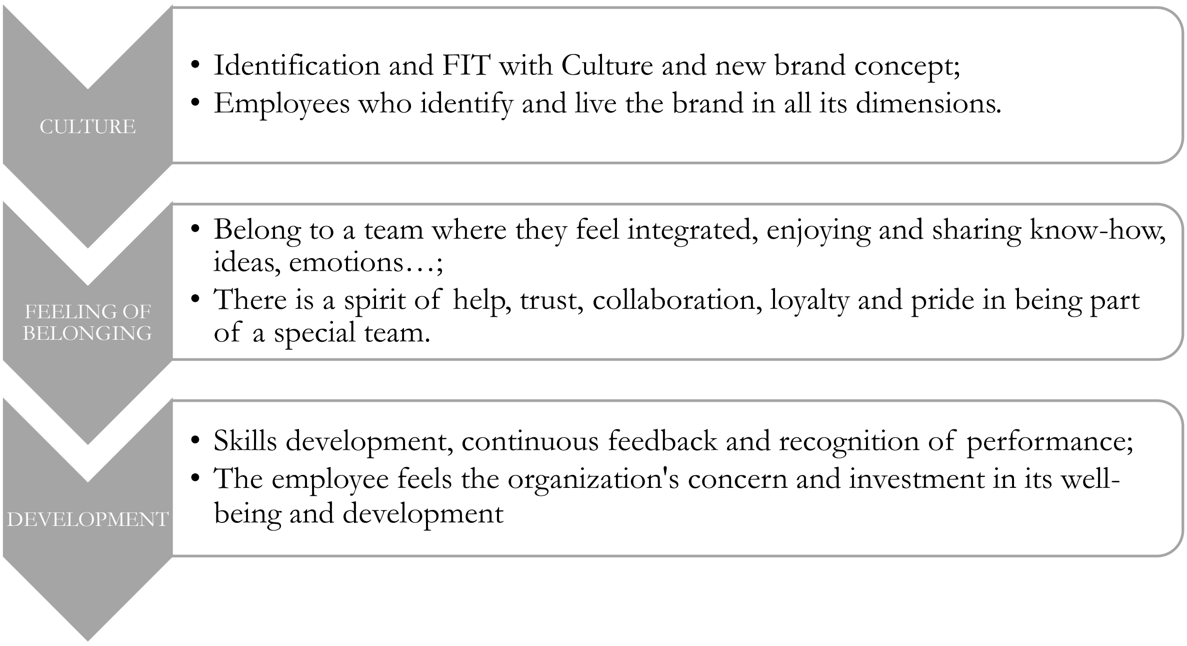

Figure 4 - Employee Engagement Initiatives

Source: Own elaboration

3.4.2 Project Steps

The main project steps are (1) set-up; (2) diagnosis; (3) model design; (4) training; (5) internal trainers workshop; (6) customer assistants workshop and (7) impact assessment. Each step is detailed as follows.

Set-Up

This was the first stage of the project and consisted of aligning information about scope, assumptions, objectives and intended outputs of the project and preparing and validating instruments for the project's diagnostic phase. The main activities developed were: (1) calendar and project team setting; (2) working session with the entire project team for kick-off and alignment; (3) definition of the various lenses for diagnosis and (4) creation of diagnostic tools. At the end of this phase the project team was aligned with the goals, expectations and timings of the project, the interview and focus group presentation were developed, the store observation table was prepared and the outputs for each step were defined.

Diagnosis

The diagnosis phase allowed: (1) to get to know the new brand positioning and the concept behind the rebranding; (2) to find the various channels of customer interaction, identifying key potentials and challenges; (3) to map strengths and areas for service improvement; (4) to identify the means of communication with the employees; (5) to get to know the operation of the store and all the processes that support the business; (6) to learn the profile and expectations of current customers, identifying what they value most and which approach might be most striking; (7) to identify the impact assessment indicators of the new service model and (8) to explore the applicability of new retail trends.

For this to be possible to achieve the following activities had to occur: (1) work sessions with the project team; (2) focus group with area and team managers; (3) diagnosis in 5 stores ensuring geographic representation (observations and interviews with employees and customers); (4) focus group with store managers; (5) focus group with customer assistants and (6) analysis and systematization of information in an executive summary and presentation to the board.

At the end of this phase, we had inputs to build a service model tailored to the needs of the company, employees and customers and inputs to build a cross-project impact communication plan.

Model Design

This phase consisted in the development of the concept of customer service across all channels according to diagnostic results, the creation of service support tools for all channels and the definition of the project communication plan and its main activities were: (1) work sessions with the project team; (2) design of the service model and its manual with information regarding concept and characterization of the customer interaction experience that is intended to be created in the various channels, the employee profile and mission, best practices at each stage and tips for dealing with challenging situations and (3) validation and model adjustments with the project team. Which finally resulted in a customer service model for the various channels (store, e-commerce, etc.), a customer service manual and a specific service guide with dos and don'ts.

Training

The training phase meant to empower employees and align their performance to the level of best practice at each stage, prepare managers for their role as service model drivers for their teams and prepare the customer support team in the new service model.

For this step the main activities developed were: (1) design of workshop for internal trainers (area managers); (2) design of workshop for internal trainers (store managers); (3) design of workshop for customer assistants; (4) project team meetings to validate training content and materials; (5) internal trainers workshop and (6) customer assistants workshop.

After this phase, we had a defined training structure and a developed syllabus and material for all the training.

Internal Trainers Workshop

This phase consisted of the delivery of the workshop for the internal trainers. Two-day for area managers and one-day for store managers training that allowed them to get to know and train the model, as well as provide team monitoring tools for model implementation.

The main goals of this workshop were: (1) to raise awareness of the role they play in making the model work; (2) train and prepare the team to act according to the new customer service model and accompany the team accordingly; (3) align the team for a good monitoring and team development practices in the implementation of the customer service model.

The expected and achieved results consisted of: (1) having the team informed and trained in the new customer service model; (2) having the team more aligned and committed to the new customer's service model and (3) making leaders prepared to track and enhance team performance.

Customer Assistants Workshop

This phase consisted of the delivery of the workshop for the customer assistants in a one-day session that allowed to know and train the model.

The purpose of this workshop was to empower the customer assistants to act accordingly to the new customer service model and to encourage the customer assistants to implement the new model to reinforce the quality of service and its alignment with the new brand concept.

As a result, this workshop led to a better prepared team capable of enhancing customer interaction.

Impact Assessment

In order to assess the impact of the new customer service model at the end of the project, a mystery customer grid adjusted to the new model was created to allow for subsequent audits and customer satisfaction monitoring initiatives were developed. Furthermore, an executive summary report with information on the satisfaction of the participants of the training was developed. Due to this necessity of analysing quantitative and qualitative information a document was created that allowed the automation of quantitative analysis of data collected from participants and a model report with examples of possible forms of analysis of the information that can be used in the future for any training.

3.4.3 Expected Outcomes

The expected impacts of this new model must consider different dimensions as seen on the table below:

Dimension	Impact
Productivity	Facilitating team relationships, collaboration and sharing of good practices by clearly defining DOs & DON´ts, new processes and level of engagement.
Customer Emotional Satisfaction	Creation of a differentiating experience, particularly in the "moments of truth".
EVP (Employer Value Proposition)	Increased organizational commitment and positive impact on EVP (Employer Value Proposition).
Business Volume	Turnover growth due to increased customer numbers and loyalty rates.

Table 6 - Expected Outcomes of the New Model

Source: Own elaboration

4. Discussion and Conclusion

This chapter is part of the continuity of the topics covered in the literature review and in the projects presented.

Inevitably, part of an organization's knowledge lies in its people. The value of the employee's knowledge and commitment depends on his or her potential and how it contributes to achieving organizational competitive advantage.

Human capital attributes have a clear impact on organizational outcomes (Finkelstein & Hambrick, 1996; Pennings et al., 1998; Pfeffer, 1998; Wright et al., 1995).

Although the use of this knowledge is an important factor in competitiveness, it is not enough to use employees' knowledge base, but it is also very important to create long-term competitive advantage (Lytras, 2008).

This is why it is important that companies strategically invest in their human capital.

Whether through outside-in strategies, such as the Customer Service Model where a prior analysis of the retail and consumer markets has developed a strategy that also allows for employee engagement or inside-out, that in the case of Reverse Mentoring, starting from the internal potential of the young employees and the wisdom of the seniors, synergies have been created for the passage of knowledge between them, which will later contribute to the company's competitiveness. In the case of the Assessment Center, the search for potential candidates with the ideal skills for the organization served to bring the company a competitive advantage before the market (Cunha et al., 2015).

In order to help with these strategic moves, Human Resources Outsourcing and Consulting is a reality that is more present in companies. Throughout this internship it was possible to see that more and more Portuguese companies are resorting to this type of service regarding strategic decisions in their Human Resources departments. That is exactly why these companies chose to use this type of service.

To understand the importance of this service a SWOT analysis regarding the use of Human Resources Outsourcing and Consulting is a very useful tool.

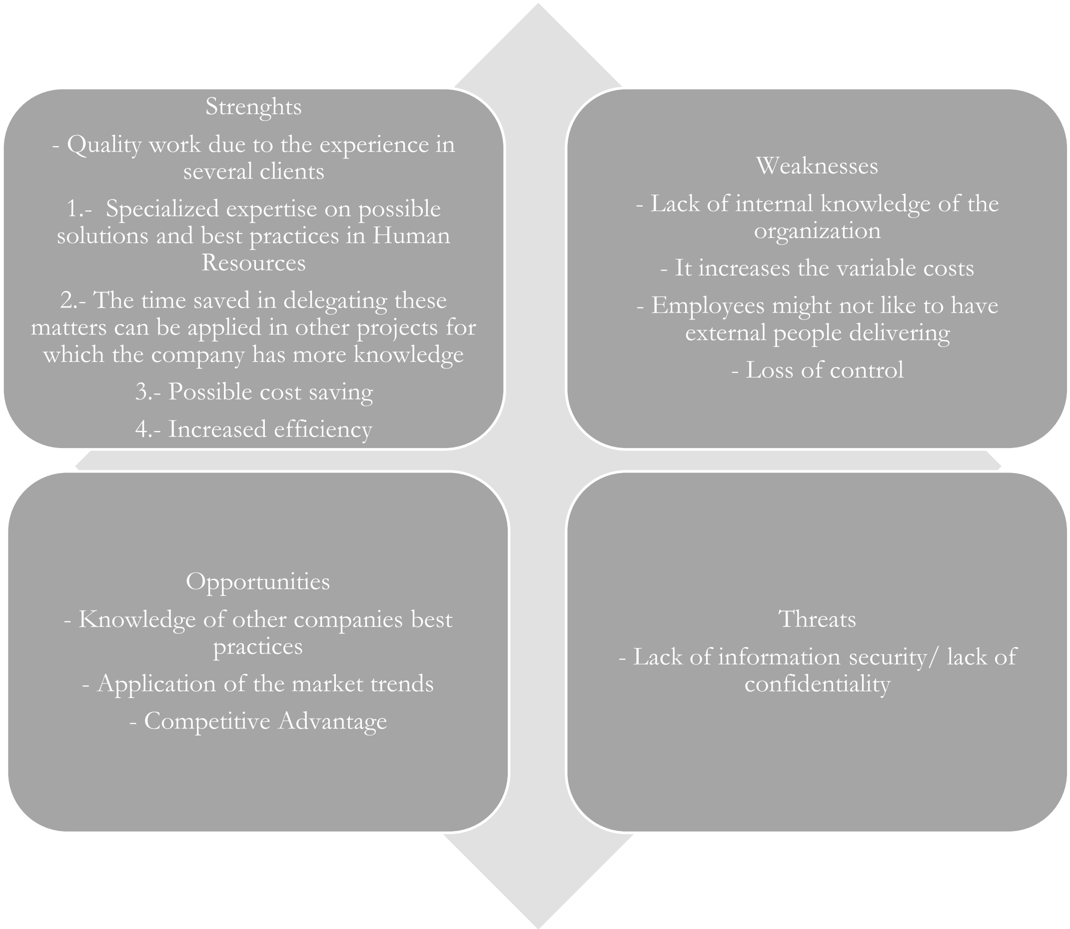

Figure 5 - SWOT Analysis of the use of Human Resources Outsourcing and Consulting

Source: Own elaboration

With the SWOT Analysis presented above we can understand that the strengths and opportunities of using Human Resource Outsourcing or Consulting in a project far overcome the weaknesses and the threats. The use of this service is clearly beneficial for companies as it allows them to bring know-how from someone who specializes in finding solutions to problems.

Regarding the literature review, it sought to briefly explain the themes of each of the projects presented. However, due to the dynamism that exists today in companies and the constant evolution of concepts, it is not possible to make a total connection between what is theory and practice. Even so, the bibliographic revision allows to make framing of the concepts and to understand these themes more deeply.

For the Reverse Mentoring Programme, it was possible to see that the reason behind its creation was to develop both their senior and their junior employees. Through the programme senior people became in contact with new technology and generational issues while helping junior employees to develop their communication and leadership skills. As Baily (2009) referred it is possible for both individuals to take something out of this relationship.

Given the time constraints affecting a curricular internship, it was not possible to complete the Reverse Mentoring project. This is a lengthy project that will take some time to allow a lasting relationship to develop between those involved which means it was not possible to make the final assessment on the project's success.

In the case of the Assessment, it was possible to see that it really consisted of a tool of evaluation of behavior based on multiple inputs as defined by Hoffman et al. (2015), page 6. It was possible to elaborate assessment reports that allowed learning to transpose what is observed on the several assessment methods, such as business cases, interviews and group dynamics to qualitative information that allowed to evaluate the performance of each candidate.

Furthermore, regarding the customer service model, there was time to prepare and conduct Focus Groups and in-store observations for the creation of the service model, which allowed contact with a completely different reality and to really understand how employee engagement can affect the service of a company. Moreover, this project allowed the creation of analysis tools that will continue to be a part of the success of the most diverse projects both in this type and in other contexts with the appropriate adaptation.

The purpose of this report was not to create new information or formulate innovative research-based conclusions, but to complement the knowledge gained throughout the internship.

In short, the goal of the integration stage in a real context in the job market has been successfully met. The internship allowed for integration in the business world through direct contact with companies from various sectors as well as the acquisition of new knowledge.

The final balance of this stage is very positive, despite the limitations sometimes encountered, there has always been an attempt to learn more and to try to overcome them with many studies, research and dedication. This experience has enabled the development of personal and professional skills in the area of Human Resources and Consulting, as well as integration into the company.

Practical and Future Research Recommendations

Although there are a lot of good reasons to choose consulting there are some factors that sometimes make it hard to ensure the continuity of the implementation. Sometimes there are projects that are uncapable of producing change in an organization or it can happen that this change does not last long due to possible incompatibilities with the organization dynamics (Turner, 1982). This efficacy usually depends on the capacity of the organization of understanding and ensuring continuity.

When implementing anything it is hard for consultants to get the entire perspective of the organization which can lead to difficulties or even to the impossibility of implementation that will compromise this capacity (Turner, 1982).

In order to avoid this problem, Consulting companies could (1) create and leave an action plan built for owners to take concrete steps to continue the project; (2) define project impact assessment metrics to closely monitor project progress and effectiveness and (3) identify project ambassadors who can ensure project continuity and track project implementation.

Lastly, as further research a comparative study should be made between Human Resource Consulting Companies and their typical clients regarding the development of instruments like Assessment Centers, Reverse Mentoring programmes, to understand the actual differences in the outcomes both would have since although Human Resource Consulting Companies are more specialized in developing these types of tools, the organizations themselves have more internal knowledge on the problems, on the people who belong to the organization and on the information available.

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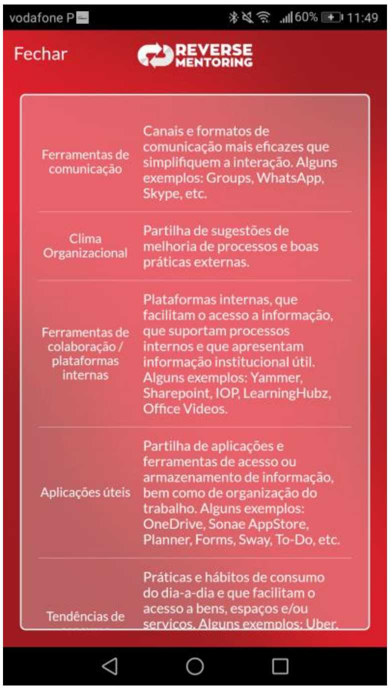
6. Annexes

6.1. Annex A – Reverse Mentoring App (Mentoring Categories Choice)

6.2. Annex B – Reverse Mentoring App (Mentoring Categories Description)



6.3. Annex C – Reverse Mentoring App (Mentor Messaging)