



HMThinking

The New Face of HR

By Janine Cristiano



Feeling liberated – what’s changed?

The days of “give it to HR” may soon be numbered. Too often, HR has performed as a “jack of all trades” function, burdened with absorbing responsibilities that don’t have an obvious home. But times are changing. Businesses must respond to a more demanding candidate pool about the strength of their culture and what it stands for. CHROs have a newly powerful voice and a captive audience.

Disruptive environmental forces are causing companies to rethink their human capital strategies and CEOs are leveraging HR executives more than ever before to determine:

- How to maintain a coherent culture with a fragmented workforce, while effectively navigating new hybrid work models;
- How to attract and retain talent as social media influences, societal pressures, and a changing competitive landscape have transformed candidate and employee expectations;
- How to respond to sensitive political events when companies are expected to take a public stance and when staying out of the fray is no longer viable.

CHROs have visibly stepped up to apply their advisory skills to address these immensely challenging subjects, and strengthened their relationships with business executives in the process. HR’s leadership and capability has been evident through all of this in ways not recognized before. The upshot is that HR now has more influence than ever.

HR’s growing influence in boardrooms:
The percentage of directorship roles in the S&P 1500 with specific human-resources skills grew more than 70% from 2020-2022, from 11.3% to 19.4%.

Source: ISS ESG

Historically HR leaders haven’t always pressed enough for influence at the top, sometimes resigned to how companies chose to engage them. It’s now imperative that CHROs take advantage of this moment to recenter attention on the roles they have been trained to do.

Challenging outdated perceptions

Long-held preconceptions about HR have been difficult to shake off. Old stereotypes that HR revolves around paper pushing and tactical execution still persist, diminishing the function’s stature. Often misunderstood, the complexity and multi-disciplinary nature of HR is sometimes conflated into a “hiring and firing” mindset. There’s still widespread ambiguity about HR’s core purpose. Perhaps, to some extent, this can be attributed to its diverse suite of services: organization development, total rewards, talent acquisition, employee relations, learning & development, employee experience, DEI, HR systems, data management & analytics – and more. That’s a lot to bring to the table!

In 2015, 60% of U.S. business leaders surveyed by Bamboo HR said that HR spends more time performing administrative and maintenance tasks than strategic tasks. We believe that in recent years a material shift has occurred.

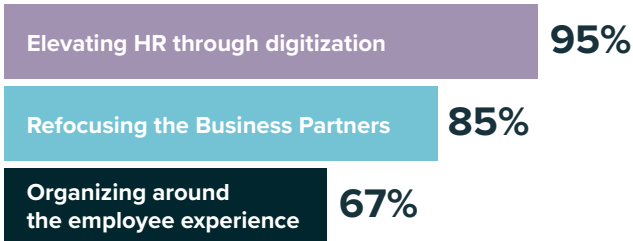
Unfortunately, HR has not always been viewed as integral to corporate strategy, but rather, on the outside looking in – reacting to events versus helping to shape them. Given the level of energy companies are now expending on human capital to improve the employee experience and build culture, it’s time to shed the “give it to HR” mentality. Responsibilities HR is often tasked with – including office management, corporate services, event planning, and others – are no doubt important, but entirely different functional specialties. HR practitioners serve another purpose, bringing a different set of skills to the business environment.

The future

This is a pivotal stage at which HR has finally gained the prominence it deserves. Now it's up to bold leaders to reimagine the future and unleash the power of HR capability. The courageous HR executive should:

- **Think like a business professional first, and HR practitioner second.**
HR's ability to understand the business and demonstrate a commercial mindset is key to building credibility. It will lead to true business partnering relationships and a track record of success.
- **Lean into technology.**
 - The power of data: Empower business leaders to make better decisions. Building a robust people analytics capability will illuminate key insights needed to drive better retention and inform HR's agenda.
 - Technology is the enabler: CHROs who embrace technology will propel their function to new heights, freeing up HR talent to focus on business strategy and on the company's *human* resources rather than its tactical operations.
- **Respond to the moment.**
Now in the spotlight, HR leaders have a tremendous opportunity to deliver transformative outcomes for their companies and in doing so, expand the influence of human capital management at the C-suite level. Take advantage of this unique opportunity to amplify HR's voice, champion its strategic role, and clear up old misconceptions.

What percentage of CHROs are prioritizing...



Source: McKinsey analysis (2022)

After decades standing on the sidelines, HR has come into its own. HR's new influence has been hard earned. Keep up the momentum!



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Janine joined Hedley May in June 2022 to lead and strengthen the U.S. Human Resources search practice. Janine identifies and recruits the best available talent in the field as well as other positions of influence on behalf of Hedley May's clients. She is focused on assisting companies navigate the evolving relationship between employer and employee and discovering the needs and requirements of each, to ensure a successful match. Janine is passionate about being in the service of others, and helping individuals tap into their potential and show up at their best.

Janine has dedicated her career to helping high-growth organizations win in intensely competitive talent markets. Her experience in the field of Human Capital Management spans over 30 years, with an emphasis on Talent Acquisition, People Development, Organizational Change, DE&I, Workforce Analytics, and M&A. She started in her profession as a Human Resources Business Partner and has since incrementally developed her expertise and leadership acumen. Janine has served as strategic advisor to functional work teams and C-Suite executives throughout her career.

Janine has built Human Resources platforms at ground level and understands the challenges that many high-growth companies face. She has also led through transformation in more mature environments, demonstrating the strategic importance of Human Resources to enhance the organization's brand and market leadership position.

Leadership Inspired

We seek out world-class executives who create lasting change and leaders who will make a world of difference. Deep market knowledge, bespoke processes and innovative thinking enable us to find extraordinary leaders across the globe.

Over 69% of all of Hedley May placements in 2022 have been diverse. We recognise the importance of diversity and its impact upon the long-term and sustainable success to organizations.