1997

The changing role of the human resources function - from administrative to strategic business partner

Crystal Ruocchio
San Jose State University

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.sjsu.edu/etd_theses

Recommended Citation

Ruocchio, Crystal, "The changing role of the human resources function - from administrative to strategic business partner" (1997). *Master's Theses*. 1469.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31979/etd.6qgy-qw9d>
https://scholarworks.sjsu.edu/etd_theses/1469

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Master's Theses and Graduate Research at SJSU ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Master's Theses by an authorized administrator of SJSU ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact scholarworks@sjsu.edu.

INFORMATION TO USERS

This manuscript has been reproduced from the microfilm master. UMI films the text directly from the original or copy submitted. Thus, some thesis and dissertation copies are in typewriter face, while others may be from any type of computer printer.

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted. Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleedthrough, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send UMI a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.

Oversize materials (e.g., maps, drawings, charts) are reproduced by sectioning the original, beginning at the upper left-hand corner and continuing from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps. Each original is also photographed in one exposure and is included in reduced form at the back of the book.

Photographs included in the original manuscript have been reproduced xerographically in this copy. Higher quality 6" x 9" black and white photographic prints are available for any photographs or illustrations appearing in this copy for an additional charge. Contact UMI directly to order.

UMI

A Bell & Howell Information Company
300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor MI 48106-1346 USA
313/761-4700 800/521-0600

**THE CHANGING ROLE OF THE HUMAN RESOURCES FUNCTION - FROM
ADMINISTRATIVE TO STRATEGIC BUSINESS PARTNER**

A Thesis

Presented to

the Faculty of the Department of Psychology

San Jose State University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Science

by

Crystal Ruocchio

May, 1997

UMI Number: 1384718

**Copyright 1997 by
Ruocchio, Crystal Rae**

All rights reserved.

**UMI Microform 1384718
Copyright 1997, by UMI Company. All rights reserved.**

**This microform edition is protected against unauthorized
copying under Title 17, United States Code.**

UMI
300 North Zeeb Road
Ann Arbor, MI 48103

© 1997

Crystal Ruocchio

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

APPROVED FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY

Dr. Howard Tokunaga

Dr. Lori Bartels

Dr. Carol McClelland, Transition Dynamics

APPROVED FOR THE UNIVERSITY

ABSTRACT

THE CHANGING ROLE OF THE HUMAN RESOURCES FUNCTION - FROM ADMINISTRATIVE TO STRATEGIC BUSINESS PARTNER

by Crystal Ruocchio

The role of the Human Resources (HR) function in organizations was studied. Literature describes that this role is changing to one of being a strategic business partner. The results of the study indicated the role is changing. Further, characteristics of the individual, such as gender and current position, as well as characteristics of the organization, such as size and the reporting structure of the HR department, have an impact on whether or not HR acts as a business partner. Also, methods for overcoming management's resistance to this new role were described. From these results, Human Resources professionals can gain valuable insight to the causes, strategies, and methods to succeed in this new role of strategic business partner.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

SECTION	PAGE
INTRODUCTION	3
Evolution of the Human Resources Function	3
Strategies for Making the Transition from Administrative Support to Strategic Business Partner	6
Partnerships/Attending Meetings	6
Outsourcing	7
Information Technology	8
General Strategies and Techniques	10
Summary	12
METHOD	15
Participants	15
Instruments	15
Procedures	16
RESULTS	17
General	17
Causes of Trend	20
Strategies	21
Overcoming Management Resistance	22
Hypotheses	23
DISCUSSION	28
REFERENCES	34
APPENDIX	36

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE	PAGE
1. Summary of Results of Study	18
2. Item Responses of Males and Females	25
3. Item Responses of Small and Large Companies	26
4. Item Responses of Individuals in a Position Below Director Level and Those of Director Level and Above	27
5. Item Responses of HR Departments Reporting to the CEO and Those Reporting to Other Executives	29

Running Head: CHANGING ROLE

**The Changing Role of the Human Resources Function -
from Administrative to Strategic Business Partner**

Crystal R. Ruocchio

San Jose State University

Abstract

The role of the Human Resources (HR) function in organizations was studied. Literature describes that this role is changing to one of being a strategic business partner. The results of the study indicated the role is changing. Further, characteristics of the individual, such as gender and current position, as well as characteristics of the organization, such as size and the reporting structure of the HR department, have an impact on whether or not HR acts as a business partner. Also, methods for overcoming management's resistance to this new role were described. From these results, Human Resources professionals can gain valuable insight to the causes, strategies, and methods to succeed in this new role of strategic business partner.

**The Changing Role of the Human Resources Function -
from Administrative to Strategic Business Partner**

The traditional role of the Human Resources (HR) function is one of administrative support. Traditionally, Human Resources was viewed as a collection of functions including payroll, benefits, compensation, records, training, etc. Volumes of paperwork, such as benefit enrollment forms, payroll change forms, and performance reviews were produced, maintained, and distributed by HR. This type of "busy-work" is what has prompted other departments to refer to HR as "paper-pushers." Further, traditional HR departments were not concerned with tying their contributions to the bottom line. Today, an organizational trend is being seen in which HR departments show their added value and tie their services directly to the bottom line. The role of the HR function in the 1990s is changing from one of administrative support to one of being a strategic business partner.

Evolution of the Human Resources Function

According to Jac Fitz-Enz (1990), the Human Resources function is going through an evolution from "paper processing" to strategic business partner. Throughout the 1950s, the primary tasks of HR were recruiting, planning company parties, and paper processing. Very few colleges offered a personnel, or Human Resources, degree program. Most people in HR at that time came into the position not by choice or plan, but instead by chance. The HR department was often made up of employees who were ineffective in other departments.

In the 1960s, the HR function shifted to the side of the individual. Employees in the HR department, who were sympathetic to social injustices, often became self-appointed corporate consciences. "Sometimes Human Resources practitioners shifted so

much in favor of the employee that they became adversaries of the organization that employed them. As a result, they came to be seen as do-gooders who only got in the way of management" (Fitz-Enz, 1990, p. 5).

During the 1970s, the government became much more involved in the business world through the creation of regulatory agencies. In many cases, HR practitioners used the laws as a source of personal power. The HR department took on the role of compliance officer. By doing so, HR employees further alienated themselves from line managers.

Finally in the 1980s, some HR professionals began to balance the needs of employees with those of the organization. By that time, however, the animosity that had developed over several decades had created a generally negative image of the value of the HR function. If the function did not effectively make a shift to adding value, top management would likely consider abolishing the entire function.

The role of the HR function in the 1990s is changing to one of being a strategic business partner. According to Tim Harris, Sr. Vice President of Human Resources at Novell Inc., being a strategic business partner means understanding the business direction of the company, including what the product is, who the typical customers are, and how the company is positioned competitively in the marketplace (Caudron, 1994). William J. Conaty, Sr. Vice President of Corporate Human Resources at General Electric, says it is key for the HR department to be able to anticipate business needs and to define and create what is needed to add value to business performance (Laabs, 1995a). HR leaders need to be concerned not only with what goes on inside a company, but also what goes on between a company and its customers. In order to add greater value, HR practices need to build external, not internal, unity, explains David Ulrich, consultant (Keller & Thomas, 1996). In a recent Wyatt study (Martinez, 1995), 69% of large U.S. companies listed

repositioning HR as a strategic business partner as a top priority. Jeffrey M. Fleisch, Manager of Pratt & Whitney's assessment organization and training operations, says HR needs to become business partners and the only way to do that is to understand what is driving the business (Laabs, 1995b). HR becomes a strategic business partner by playing a key role in business decision-making. An HR department that has proven it understands the needs of the business is likely to be asked to participate in meetings and discussions of key business strategies. By learning the needs and issues of the business, HR can use its expertise to reveal a new perspective, for example, restructuring the organization. According to the "Best Practices Benchmark Study of HR" (The Hackett Group, 1995), one of HR's most important functions is understanding the skills, competencies and behaviors needed in the workforce to execute the company's business strategy.

As a strategic business partner, HR shows business managers exactly how the function contributes to competitive advantage. At Coopers & Lybrand LLP (Raimy, 1996), the HR department surveys customers to find out which skills they expect any professional service team to possess and which competencies are most important. The results illustrate the ways in which Coopers' HR practices, such as employee selection, promotion, and training, add value that competing firms cannot match.

Part of becoming a strategic business partner is tying the results of the HR function to the bottom line. This is done by linking traditional HR responsibilities to tangible business goals. The HR department needs to perform in a measurable and accountable way, for instance by looking at cost-per-hire or selection practices compared to performance on-the-job.

Strategies for Making the Transition from Administrative Support to Strategic Business Partner

Partnerships/Attending Meetings

One technique for becoming a strategic business partner is to form partnerships between HR professionals and business functions or line-department managers. Examples of companies, e.g., Texas Instruments, Pratt & Whitney, Clorox, and Matthew Bender & Co., Inc., utilizing this technique are found throughout literature (Caudron, 1994; Laabs, 1995a). This partnership allows HR to better understand the managers' business needs, which in turn, enables HR to be a more value-added resource. Instead of creating standard HR policies, HR is able to focus on addressing the real business needs of the organization. Linda Reiss, Vice President of Operations for Matthew Bender, claims that the partnership program has been valuable for two main reasons (Laabs, 1995a). First, the HR staff now understands what drives their business; therefore, if a change is required, HR now knows from the line manager's position what is driving the need for that change. Secondly, HR professionals gain a more balanced view of the business; therefore, they are better able to balance business needs with employee needs.

At Texas Instruments, a process was put in place to allow HR to partner with line managers. This process involved two management teams, working together to formulate HR policies (Stuart, 1992). One team, primarily consisting of HR managers, creates policies in draft or proposal form. Then, the second team, consisting of line managers and Chuck Nielson, Vice President of HR, meet to discuss and ultimately approve the proposed HR policies. By using this technique, HR is getting direct input from line managers about what is important, as well as their "buy-in" for policies put in place.

Levi Strauss also includes line managers in the formation of HR policies and procedures (Laabs, 1992). Task forces are formed to discuss issues with established

procedures, e.g., the performance appraisal process, as well as to create new policies. The company pays for employees from field locations to fly to the home office to participate in the meetings. In fact, Donna Goya, Senior Vice President of HR, says "the theme of all our human resources programs is partnership, and with partnership comes personal accountability, flexibility, and open communication" (Laabs, 1992, p. 37).

Merck & Company, Inc., rated number one in *Fortune* magazine's "America's Most Admired Corporations" for seven years (Anfuso, 1994), forms joint ventures to help the company grow and diversify. From the time Merck begins conversations about creating a strategic alliance with another company, the HR staff at Merck gets involved. By becoming a strategic business partner, the HR department has proven to upper management that it has value to add to these decision-making discussions. The HR department helps to determine policies and procedures, and the staffing solutions to fit best with the joint venture. Merck's HR department enhances the success of the company's joint ventures by being consultants, facilitating communications between the two companies.

Outsourcing

Becoming a strategic business partner requires a great deal of time and energy on the part of HR professionals. Although this trend in HR departments involves getting away from focusing on administrative tasks, these responsibilities will not simply disappear. Records still need to be maintained, benefits programs administered, and general programs run. Furthermore, three business trends have led to an increase in these administrative duties (Pringle, 1995). First, mergers and acquisitions create new enrollment nightmares. Second, corporate downsizing has left many HR departments with an inherent paradox: fewer employees and more duties. Lastly, the move toward flexible benefits that allow employees greater choice also requires greater services and

personalized information. Outsourcing these activities appears to be the solution. Outsourcing means utilizing an outside service or consultant to perform a certain function. According to a study by the Corporate Leadership Council (1995), 85% of employers already outsource, or have plans to outsource, some or all of the administration of their HR and benefits programs. HR activities that best lend themselves to outsourcing are those that are necessary but do not add value to the business, for example, benefit program administration, COBRA administration, and generation of communication materials. Outsourcing these non-value-added duties allows HR more time to become a strategic business partner.

Sandra L. Farmer, Director of Compensation and Benefits at Sybase, Inc., explains that her company has used outsourcing to allow the HR staff to concentrate on strategic planning, rather than day-to-day administration (Lissak, 1995). The decision to outsource at Sybase, Inc., was based on a cost-benefit analysis of how HR could best contribute to the bottom line.

Information Technology

The use of a company's Human Resource Information System (HRIS) may allow for a better alignment of HR to business goals. The perspective and knowledge base of the future HRIS manager must include an understanding of the core mission of the organization and the company's purpose for being (Pasqualetto, 1993). To be valuable, the HRIS must be aligned with the mission of the organization. In order for the HRIS to be in alignment with the company's mission, the business goals must be analyzed to identify the critical features the HRIS must contain to support the business mission. For example, the objectives of the HRIS in an organization looking at global expansion would be very different from one seeking to cut operating costs.

The use of information technology is allowing HR departments to automate workflow and redefine the way they function, which enables them to take on the new role of strategic business partner (Greengard, 1994). Simple, yet time-consuming, administrative duties, such as updating employees' personal data, can be handled automatically by the employees through the company's HRIS. Further, information on the company's benefits programs can be made available to employees directly through the HRIS, eliminating the need to answer basic employee questions in person. Jim Perkins, Senior Vice President of Personnel for Federal Express Corp., says their HRIS allows employee data to be available to managers almost immediately (Caudron, 1994). Without automation, this type of processing could take months, with less accurate results. Therefore, technology allows more time for building relationships and understanding the needs of the workforce. The goal is to eliminate work that is not value-added, to resolve problems on a more proactive basis, and to increase the business partnering role of HR (Greengard, 1994).

While preparing for a reengineering effort, it is imperative to think through the rationale, processes, and accompanying changes in systems. There are six critical success factors for reengineering HR's efforts through effectively utilizing information technology: (a) senior management involvement/championship, (b) clear vision and model for change in business and HR, (c) involvement across all levels in planning and implementation of the use of the technology, (d) early, ongoing, and candid communications about what the new technology can provide, as well as any weaknesses, (e) changes in supporting systems (rewards, performance appraisal, etc.) to establish the procedure for capturing the information in the HRIS, (f) empowering the reengineering teams and holding them accountable to clear and measurable targets (Yeung & Brockbank, 1995).

General Strategies and Techniques

Although the benefits of the changing role of HR may seem logical, the techniques for truly making it happen may not be intuitive. The following are some general guidelines HR professionals can employ to gain a broader view of a company (Schoeppel, 1995):

1. **Lead plant and facility tours.** This will give HR the opportunity to meet line managers, learn more about their areas, and discuss their concerns.
2. **Conduct new hire orientations.** As more employees are hired and go through orientation, HR's internal company network will broaden. As a result of this process, HR will be seen as a credible contact point for other departments.
3. **Involve line managers and employees in needs assessments.** This will allow HR employees to build relationships, increase their knowledge of business needs, and enhance their credibility.
4. **Learn different areas of HR.** Since HR professionals are now expected to become generalists, establishing partnerships with line managers rather than being function-based, professionals in the field are required to know different areas.
5. **Study company publications.** This will provide valuable information on the company in terms of mission, direction, problems, etc.
6. **Ask questions when meeting with various managers to discuss their concerns and issues.**

Further, of utmost importance, is to establish credibility (Laabs, 1995a). If the HR department is going to be allowed to participate as a strategic business partner, for example, being invited to decision-making discussions, the employees in the HR department must be viewed as credible. Janet Brady, Vice President of Human Resources at Clorox Co., states that HR will not be included in value-added opportunities unless it is viewed as strategically oriented and knowledgeable about the business issues that will

determine the company's future (Raimy, 1995). One way to establish this credibility is to speak to managers in their language, not HR jargon. Being grounded in reality further builds credibility. HR professionals also need to be careful not to propose lofty ideas without getting "buy-in" and commitment first. Lastly, maintaining credibility involves keeping promises.

Another suggestion for being a value-added function is to survey the internal customers of HR's services. This strategy is being used at Santa Fe Pacific Corporation (Talbot, 1994). The HR department at Santa Fe conducts frequent surveys of their 15,000-employee workforce to determine employees' concerns. The areas identified as needing improvement become the priorities for their change efforts. At Warner-Lambert Co., HR professionals from headquarters visit their various plants to conduct interviews and surveys, lead focus groups, and review records (Raimy, 1996). They call this system the Human Resource and Business Effectiveness Process. The goal is to evaluate how HR supports business effectiveness. After two or three days of information-gathering, the team holds an exit meeting with the site's top HR manager and sends a written report to the next level up in the organization.

Some characteristics of the employees in a HR department may also contribute to whether or not the department is a strategic business partner. For example, literature shows that HR employees who have experience in other areas, in addition to HR, are more capable of being strategic business partners. At Levi Strauss, HR employees are encouraged to move into line assignments to get "hands-on" exposure to various departments (Laabs, 1992). Jac Fitz-Enz says most successful HR employees who think very strategically are not HR career professionals (Shadovitz, 1996).

Another characteristic of HR that leads to a more strategic business partner philosophy is the organizational structure. The literature shows that when HR reports to

the CEO, the department is considered more of a strategic business partner (Anfuso, 1994; Caudron, 1991; Laabs, 1995a, 1992; Talbott, 1994).

The role of the HR function at Hewlett-Packard is changing ("HR at Hewlett-Packard," 1993). Pete Peterson, Vice President of Personnel, developed the *Create the Environment* video in 1990 to explain the direction of HR within the organization. The following general guidelines were set forth to meet the department's goals:

1. develop clear understanding of role of HR
2. create breakthroughs in process management
3. stimulate change in areas such as teamwork, quality improvements, and personnel development

The following are some of the strategies being employed by Hewlett-Packard to reach these goals:

1. implement Total Quality Control (TQC) in HR
2. focus on process improvement, therefore, eliminating unnecessary work
3. make a major investment in information technology

Each of these guidelines and strategies can be effective in many other HR departments to reach the goal of being a strategic business partner.

Summary

The concept of HR becoming a strategic business partner and being accountable for proving its value in terms of bottom line is not new. However, the 1990s is turning this concept into a reality. To be successful today, HR professionals must break the old pattern of thinking and start practicing the new techniques described here. Some prognosticators cite outsourcing and automation as the demise of the HR function altogether. The optimists see the greater potential for the profession, as truly being a value-added function. Many people agree the trend appears to be one that will continue

and must be embraced by professionals in the field, otherwise HR will face extinction as a function.

While there is a fair amount of literature on the topic of HR becoming a strategic business partner, there are some definite questions still left unanswered. This study is designed to answer some of those questions. The first question examines the causes of this trend. Further, this study examines what strategies are actually being employed in real organizations by having participants cite their own experiences. Next, how this trend can become a reality in a company whose management does not support it will be investigated.

Further, this study is designed to test five hypotheses based on characteristics of the individual or organization for predicting the tendency of HR to be a strategic business partner. First, the individual's gender is expected to have an impact on whether or not he or she actually is, or has the desire to be, a strategic business partner within their organization. It is predicted that males are more likely to be strategic business partners than females because males are traditionally more knowledgeable about the core business and understand the technical versus the administrative.

The second hypothesis concerns the likelihood of a company's HR department to be a strategic business partner based on the size of the company. It is predicted that a small company, with fewer than 5,000 employees, is less likely to be moving in the direction of, or actually be, a strategic business partner. Typically a small company will have a small HR staff who does not have the time necessary to devote to becoming a strategic business partner.

Third, as the literature describes, the amount of HR experience of an individual relates to their tendency to be a strategic business partner. It is predicted that an individual with fewer than 15 years of HR experience is more driven to become, or actually is, a strategic business partner. There are two primary reasons for this

expectation. First, an individual with fewer years of experience may have been more recently educated, therefore, may have been taught this new trend. Secondly, the individual may have been in other areas of business, such as marketing or operations, and having knowledge of the business, are in a better position to be a strategic business partner.

The fourth hypothesis considers the current position of an individual as a predictor of being a strategic business partner. It is predicted that a person who is a director level or higher is more likely to be a strategic business partner because he or she is likely to have more exposure to the needs and issues of the rest of the business, and most likely to see their role as having a direct impact on the business.

Finally, the organizational structure, as illustrated in the literature, is expected to have an impact on whether or not HR is seen as a strategic business partner. It is predicted that an HR department that reports directly to the CEO is more likely to be a strategic business partner. These departments have more insight into business issues and needs, because they are directed by the overall leader of the company. HR will more likely be included, or at least represented, in decision-making discussions. Further, an HR department that reports to the CEO will have the support of the top level of management, for instance, the CEO can describe the function as one that adds value. Lastly, the overall image of the HR department is likely to be one of a revenue impacting department when the department reports directly to the CEO.

There are many benefits to be gained by completing this study. The results will give HR professionals further insight into this trend. Knowing specific strategies for becoming a business partner can provide direction to an HR department which has not reached this level within their organizations. One of the main obstacles for departments that are not strategic business partners is management resistance. It is crucial for HR

departments to understand techniques that have been successful in overcoming this type of resistance. Finally, understanding how the characteristics of an individual or organization influence the strategic business partner relationship of HR may help professionals decide what kind of organization to work for and to set their expectations realistically.

Method

Participants

Human Resources professionals ($N = 14$) participated in the study. These professionals were identified through personal networking. The participants ranged from a generalist to a Senior Vice President level. Seven of the participants held a position which was at a manager level or below. The remaining seven participants were in a position of director level or above. A representative sample of industries was also included in the study. The industries included were high technology, professional services, medical device manufacturing and consumer products. The participants had various levels of Human Resource experience. The range of experience was from 6 to 29 years. Six participants had fewer than 15 years of Human Resources experience. The remaining 8 participants had greater than 15 years of experience. Seven males and seven females participated in this study. Eight of the respondents work in a company with less than 5,000 employees. Six of the respondents work in a company with more than 5,000 employees. Lastly, nine of the respondents' HR departments report to the President, CEO, or Chairman. The remaining five respondents' HR departments report to a variety of other executives, such as the Vice President of Operations, the Senior Vice President of Administration, the CFO, or the COO.

Instruments

A written questionnaire was utilized in this study. Items 1 to 16 were general statements regarding the changing role of Human Resources. These items were designed

to assess the respondents' general opinions about different aspects of Human Resources that address the changing role, e.g., "Management supports HR's efforts to become a strategic business partner." Respondents were asked to indicate a number, based on a scale, that demonstrated to what extent they agreed or disagreed with the statements. The 16 items in this section of the survey were based on a 6-point scale. The scale ranged from one, "Strongly Disagree" to five, "Strongly Agree," and contained a zero response, "Does Not Apply."

Next the subjects were asked a series of 12 open-ended questions regarding the following: whether or not their company's Human Resources department is a strategic business partner, strategies used for becoming a business partner, and failures and successes of various strategies employed. These items were designed to obtain more specific information about actual strategies being utilized in organizations. These responses also provided more in-depth evidence of respondents' attitudes about the changing role of Human Resources. For instance, one question asked "As you have worked to become a strategic business partner, have you had to overcome management resistance or pessimism? If yes or somewhat, how did you and your department handle it?"

Finally, 12 demographic-related questions were asked. Questions included age, gender, education, years of related experience, current position, and company information. These questions were asked to analyze the data to test the hypotheses examined in this study. The complete questionnaire is provided in the Appendix.

Procedures

Participants were contacted via phone and/or electronic mail. Subjects were asked to participate in a study regarding the changing role of Human Resources--from administrative to strategic business partner. The subjects were told the information they

provided in the study would remain confidential. The study instrument was sent and returned via U.S. mail or facsimile, whichever the respondent preferred.

Items 1 to 16 were analyzed to determine the average response, as well as the most common responses. Content analysis was used to analyze the results of the 12 open-ended questions. The responses to these questions were listed, then grouped according to common responses. The results of this analysis indicated the most frequent opinions, or practices, with respect to the changing role of the Human Resources function within actual organizations.

Results

A summary of the results of this study is presented in Table 1. Each of the findings will be described in detail below.

General

The results of this study indicated a strong agreement that the role of HR is changing from one of administrative support to a strategic business partner. Eleven of the 14 participants responded "yes," to the question of whether or not the role is changing (open-ended Item #1). The remaining three respondents stated that the role is "somewhat" changing. In terms of the participants' HR departments being a strategic business partner, 12 stated "yes" or "somewhat," and only 2 stated "no" (open-ended Item #2). Further, 64% of those surveyed strongly agree that they have a clear understanding of the issues of their company (close-ended Item #10). Of those responding, 71% strongly agree that they work directly with line managers (close-ended Item #3). Another 21% moderately agree with the same statement. Most interestingly, 100% of the respondents believe they are viewed as credible within their organization (close-ended Item #16).

Table 1

Summary of Results of Study

- Role of HR is changing from administrative support to strategic business partner
- Causes of trend:
 - Create competitive advantage for organization
 - "Human resources" seen as business asset
 - Organization's survival; HR as strategic business partner contributes to the profitability of a company
 - Executives concerns about "value-add" of various functions
 - Availability of software tools and technology
 - HR professionals are more knowledgeable and able to fulfill the new role
 - Demonstrated track record of HR has established credibility
- Strategies for becoming a strategic business partner:
 - Developing partnerships
 - Attending meetings
 - Outsourcing
 - Using information technology
- Methods for overcoming management's resistance:
 - Gain respect and credibility
 - Show management value-add HR can offer
 - Learn and speak business language
 - Market HR department as adding value

table continues

- **Hypotheses:**
 - **More likely for men to be strategic business partners than women**
 - **More likely for the HR department in a large company to be a strategic business partner**
 - **Not more likely for individuals with fewer than 15 years of HR experience to be strategic business partners**
 - **More likely for a person in a Director level or higher position to be strategic business partner**
 - **More likely for an HR department that reports directly to the CEO to be strategic business partner**
-

Causes of Trend

Several causes of the trend of HR moving from administrative support to a strategic business partner were discovered through content analysis. One cause was to create a competitive advantage for the organization. Respondents indicated that an organization's workforce, its "human resources," is the one true strategic or competitive advantage a company has over its competitors. This is the one feature of an organization that cannot be easily duplicated. Further, senior level management now believes the quality of the workforce and the organization's culture will significantly impact long-term competitive advantage and overall business results.

A second, related, cause of this trend is the realization that a company's human resources are a business asset. One respondent stated that "people resources are highly-valued business assets, hence, a critical component of the enterprise's strategies." Further, managers should rely on HR to provide a service of advising and counseling on people-asset related business matters that are critical to the success of the company. There is a general recognition and awareness that people issues and resources are usually the most "enabling" and "disabling" elements of any effort. Therefore, managers understand the need to have HR's involvement in making decisions that have an impact on the organization's human resources.

Another major cause of this trend discovered in the analysis of this study was the organization's survival. The dollar impact of decisions that HR contributes to is significant. Respondents expressed that the gap in profitability between those companies that do and do not have "state of the art" HR practices indicates the opportunity cost at stake. The role of the HR function as being a strategic business partner contributes to the profitability of a company.

A fourth cause of this trend was executives' concerns about "value-add." The new focus has become how much value each function adds to the business strategy. Human Resources must be prepared to contribute to the attainment of company goals. A related cause of this trend described is the threat of non-value added roles or functions being downsized. Several respondents indicated that if an administrative role does not add value or meet business strategies, the role or function is subject to downsizing. Executives are interested in the results of a function measured against business objectives.

Some more general causes for this trend include the increased availability of software tools and technology, resulting in more time for the HR staff to devote to being a strategic business partner. Also, the ability of HR professionals appears to have increased over the years, enabling HR professionals to think and act as a business partner. Lastly, a demonstrated positive track record of HR departments has helped develop credibility.

Strategies

Several strategies are being employed by HR departments to become strategic business partners. One strategy being used in organizations is developing partnerships between HR and line managers. These relationships help build trust and the understanding to create HR programs to fit the organization's business needs. This partnership also fosters cooperation and collaboration and provides a vehicle for HR input in decisions. Some factors contributing to the success of this strategy are HR's understanding of the strategic direction of the company, HR personnel thinking like a businessperson first and HR professional second, and frequent contact between the individuals in the partnership. HR needs to take on the role of partner, instead of corporate authority, or "cop." Further, another problem to avoid is letting issues over responsibilities overshadow common business issues.

Another strategy for being a strategic business partner described was attending meetings where key business decisions are discussed. In order for HR to be included in these meetings, a good relationship must exist between managers and HR personnel. The HR personnel must be viewed as credible and having something to contribute. One factor that may lead to the success of this strategy is HR's understanding of the business, so their solutions to problems and suggestions fit the needs of the business. Further, early involvement in key business issues heightens the impact achievable by HR.

Another key strategy for being a business partner is outsourcing. Benefit, COBRA, and Stock Administration are the key functions being outsourced in the organizations studied. Several factors lead to the success of using outsourcing. The most frequently cited were cost savings, use of a quality provider, and a seamless transition. There were also factors cited that contribute to the failure of outsourcing. These included added cost without added value, poor quality of service provided, and workforce resistance due to feeling as though they are being sent to an "outsider."

Finally, the use of a company's Human Resource Information System (HRIS) is another strategy for being a strategic business partner. Several factors contribute to the success of using an HRIS. First, the return on investment must be significant and identified early. Second, line management must strongly support the effort. Third, the data must be accurate and timely. Lastly, the information needs to serve the business, as opposed to just tracking data.

Overcoming Management Resistance

Eleven of the 14 (79%) respondents replied that they have had to overcome management resistance, to some extent, to being a strategic business partner. Many methods for overcoming management's resistance to HR being a strategic business partner were described in the responses to the questionnaire. One was to gain respect and

credibility. This is critical to being asked to participate in partnerships with line managers and in meetings where key business decisions are being discussed. There are several ways to gain credibility. Human Resources must deliver on commitments and avoid making grand promises or demands. HR personnel should demonstrate technical proficiency and understanding of the issues of the business. Lastly, if HR displays self-confidence, that will help generate confidence from others.

Another strategy for overcoming management resistance is to show management the value-add the HR function can offer. This can be accomplished by controlling costs, providing a valuable service, and providing valuable information. Ultimately, HR must show what the department can do to help the business.

Further, HR professionals need to learn and speak the language of the business. Business language includes the technical terms used by operations, the accounting terms used by finance, and the business needs terminology used by executives. Knowing this language also allows HR to ask proactive business questions.

Finally, the respondents recommended marketing the HR department internally as adding value. The first suggestion was to start with the orientation process. This is a great time to meet new employees and cite what HR can do to help the business. Further, HR personnel should request to be put on the agenda at managers' staff meetings and employee meetings.

Hypotheses

Relevant items from 1 to 16, as well as 2 general questions, "Do you agree the role of HR is changing?" (open-ended Item #1) and "Do you feel your HR department is a strategic business partner?" (open-ended Item #2), were used to test the 5 hypotheses. The responses to the items were analyzed based on the characteristics of the individual or individual's organization. The first hypothesis examined the relationship between an

individual's gender and whether or not he or she is a strategic business partner within their organization. The results indicated it is more likely for men to be a strategic business partner. Responses to several of these items supported the hypothesis (see Table 2).

The second hypothesis, regarding the size of the company, was also supported based on the results, although the differences were not as impressive as those between men and women. It is slightly more likely for the HR department in a large company, with more than 5,000 employees, to be a strategic business partner. Four of the seven responses that the individual's HR department is a strategic business partner were from large companies. Table 3 illustrates the other items supporting this hypothesis.

The third hypothesis concerned the amount of HR experience of the participant. There was not enough evidence to support the hypothesis that individuals with fewer than 15 years of HR experience are more likely to be a strategic business partner. When responding to the question, "Do you agree the role of HR is changing?" (open-ended Item #1), 6 individuals with less experience agreed to some degree, while 8 people with more than 15 years experience agreed to some extent. This is one item's results that do not support the hypothesis. Interestingly, the only responses that did support this hypothesis were for questions related to outsourcing. Five individuals with less than 15 years of HR experience agreed that outsourcing allows more time to devote to being a strategic business partner, while only 3 with more experience agreed. Further, six individuals with less experience disagreed that outsourcing leads to a lack of work, while only four people with more experience disagreed.

The fourth hypothesis considered the current position of an individual as a predictor of being a strategic business partner. This hypothesis was supported. A person who is a director level or higher appears to be more likely to be a strategic business partner. The results of almost every item supported this prediction (see Table 4). Further,

Table 2

Item Responses of Males (N= 7) and Females (N= 7) (most frequent responses)
Values Expressed as Percentages

Item	<u>Strongly Agree</u>		<u>Moderately Agree</u>		<u>Total "Agree"</u>	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Clear understanding of needs of company	71	29	14	57	86	86
Mgmt supports HR's efforts	29	14	43	43	71	57
I am invited to mtgs	57	14	14	43	71	57
My HR dept is highly thought of	29	0	43	57	71	57
Item	<u>Strongly Disagree</u>		<u>Moderately Disagree</u>		<u>Total "Disagree"</u>	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Mgmt doesn't see HR as strategic business partner	43	29	43	14	86	43
I usually hear about key bus decisions after they're made	57	0	29	57	86	57
Item	<u>Yes</u>					
	Male	Female				
Do you agree the role of HR is changing?	86	71				
Is your dept. a strategic bus partner?	86	14				

Table 3

Item Responses of Small (N = 8) and Large (N= 6) Companies (most frequent responses)
Values Expressed as Percentages

Item	<u>Strongly Agree</u>		<u>Moderately Agree</u>		<u>Total "Agree"</u>	
	Small	Large	Small	Large	Small	Large
Mgmt supports HR's efforts	13	33	38	50	50	83
I am invited to mtgs	13	67	38	17	50	83
My HR dept is highly thought of	25	0	25	83	50	83
Item	<u>Strongly Disagree</u>		<u>Moderately Disagree</u>		<u>Total "Disagree"</u>	
	Small	Large	Small	Large	Small	Large
Mgmt doesn't see HR as strategic business partner	25	50	25	33	50	83
I usually hear about key bus decisions after they're made	13	50	50	33	63	83

Table 4

Item Responses of Individuals in a Position Below Director Level (N = 7), and Those of Director Level and Above (N = 7) (most frequent responses) Values Expressed as Percentages

Item	<u>Strongly Agree</u>		<u>Moderately Agree</u>		<u>Total "Agree"</u>	
	Below	Above	Below	Above	Below	Above
Clear understanding of needs of company	14	86	57	14	71	100
Mgmt supports HR's efforts	14	29	14	71	29	100
I am invited to mtgs	14	57	14	43	29	100
My HR dept is highly thought of	0	29	43	57	43	86
Clear understanding of issues of company	43	86	43	14	86	100
HR personnel are involved in decs	43	57	29	43	71	100
I work directly with line managers	71	71	14	29	86	100
Item	<u>Strongly Disagree</u>		<u>Moderately Disagree</u>		<u>Total "Disagree"</u>	
	Below	Above	Below	Above	Below	Above
Mgmt doesn't see HR as strategic business partner	14	57	29	29	43	86
I usually hear about key bus decisions after they're made	0	57	57	29	57	86

in response to the question, "Do you agree the role of HR is changing?" (open-ended Item #1), 7 of the 11 "yes" responses were by individuals in a director level or higher position. Lastly, in response to the question, "Do you feel your HR department is a strategic business partner?" (open-ended Item #2), five of the seven "yes" responses were given by individuals in a higher position.

The results of the test of the final hypothesis, regarding the reporting structure of HR, indicated that an HR department that reports directly to the CEO is more likely to be a strategic business partner (see Table 5). Nine of the 14 respondents who agreed that the role of HR is changing, to some degree, report directly to the CEO. Eight of the 11 respondents who reported that their department is a strategic business partner, to some degree, report directly to the CEO.

Discussion

The literature and study results demonstrate that the role of the HR function is changing from one of administrative support to one of being a strategic business partner. This study revealed a more in-depth understanding of the causes of this trend. The most commonly cited causes were the realization that an organization's workforce is a critical business asset and the fact that executives have become increasingly concerned with the demonstrated "value-add" of functions. Other general causes for this trend, revealed in this study, included the availability of technology and a demonstrated positive track record of HR departments has helped develop credibility.

Another finding in this study is that the strategies for being a business partner described in the literature are also being employed in actual organizations. The most frequently cited strategies were developing partnerships with line managers, attending key business meetings, outsourcing, and using the company's HRIS.

Table 5

Item Responses of HR Departments Reporting to the CEO (N = 9) and those Reporting to Other Executives (N = 5) (most frequent responses) *Values Expressed as Percentages*

Item	<u>Strongly Agree</u>		<u>Moderately Agree</u>		<u>Total "Agree"</u>	
	CEO	Other	CEO	Other	CEO	Other
Clear understanding of needs of company	67	20	33	40	100	60
Mgmt supports HR's efforts	22	20	44	40	67	60
My HR dept is highly thought of	22	0	56	40	78	40
Clear understanding of issues of company	67	60	33	20	100	80
HR personnel are involved in decs	44	60	44	20	89	80
I work directly with line managers	67	80	33	0	100	80
I believe I'm viewed as credible	44	80	56	20	100	100
Item	<u>Strongly Disagree</u>		<u>Moderately Disagree</u>		<u>Total "Disagree"</u>	
	CEO	Other	CEO	Other	CEO	Other
Mgmt doesn't see HR as strategic business partner	44	20	33	20	78	40
I usually hear about key bus decisions after they're made	44	0	44	40	89	40
Outsourcing leads to lack of work	11	0	44	60	56	60

For an HR department to be a strategic business partner, the first step is to overcome management resistance, if it exists. This study demonstrated several methods for overcoming such resistance. First and foremost is to gain respect and credibility. Also, HR must show management the value-add the HR function can offer. Learning to speak the language of the business further allows HR to overcome management resistance. The last technique suggested by survey respondents was to market the HR department internally as one that adds value.

The next section of the study analyzed the results based on the hypotheses. The results indicated that men are more likely to be a business partner than women, that the HR department of a large company is more likely to be a strategic business partner, a person who is a director level or higher is more likely to be a strategic business partner, and that an HR department that reports directly to the CEO is more likely to be a business partner. The third hypothesis, concerning the amount of HR experience of an individual, was not supported. The results indicated that employees with fewer years of experience are not more likely to be a strategic business partner. One possible reason is that individuals with more experience may be viewed as more credible and knowledgeable.

The results of this study have several implications for HR professionals. One benefit of this study was a more in-depth understanding of the causes of this trend. Most literature only briefly explains potential causes. Gaining the insight of HR professionals practicing the role of strategic business partner was invaluable to understanding the underlying causes. These causes also help to demonstrate the value of HR being a strategic business partner. For instance, this relationship can build a competitive advantage for an organization and actually impact an organization's survival.

Next, it is beneficial to realize the strategies described in the literature are applicable in real world situations. HR professionals can, therefore, use this information in

practice. These strategies can provide direction to an HR department attempting to become a strategic business partner. For instance, HR professionals can attend meetings within their organization where key business decisions are being made, utilize an outsourcing service, or partner with line managers to become a strategic business partner. Furthermore, several factors leading to the success or failure of the various strategies were examined in this study.

One question addressed in this study that was largely missing from the literature was how to overcome management's resistance. The suggestions provided by the HR professionals in the study can give hope to HR professionals who would enjoy acting as a strategic business partner, but whose management does not understand the potential value to be gained.

Lastly, understanding the relationship between the characteristics of an individual or organization as a predictor of being a strategic business partner adds further insight into this trend. Based on the results of the study, gender, company size, position, and HR's reporting structure all appear to impact whether or not an individual or department is a strategic business partner. The results indicated a male, working in a company with more than 5,000 employees, in a Director level or higher position, where the HR department reports directly to the CEO of the company is most likely to be a strategic business partner. This is, of course, not to say that one can always predict HR's role based on these characteristics, however, the information is another piece of the puzzle.

This study did have some weaknesses. One major weakness was the small sample size. A larger sample size could possibly have been obtained by working directly with a professional organization to reach a greater number of potential participants. While the results in many ways confirm what is written in literature, one needs to be careful when making broad generalizations based on these results. Fortunately, although the sample

size was small, a fairly representative sample was obtained. There were an equal number of men and women surveyed. Participants were from a variety of industries. The number of participants with fewer than 15 years of experience and greater than 15 years of experience were 6 and 8, respectively. An equal number of participants surveyed had below or above Director level positions. Eight respondents worked in small companies and six worked in large. Lastly, 9 of the 14 respondents worked in an organization where the HR department reports directly to the President, CEO, or Chairman.

Another potential weakness of this study was the procedure of obtaining information from respondents. The survey instrument could have been shortened by including only the first 16 items. The remainder of the items could have been asked of the participants in an interview format. This may have appeared less time consuming to some participants, leading to a higher response rate.

The topic of HR becoming a strategic business partner is encompassing enough to allow for even further research. Differences among various industries are worth investigation. This would yield another organizational characteristic that may have an impact on whether or not an HR department is likely to be a strategic business partner. Additionally, it would be interesting to examine the evolution of HR departments from specific organizations from being one of administrative support to strategic business partner. This type of study could provide further insight into this trend, such as, the length of time the transition typically takes, or specific examples of management resistance and how it was overcome. To take this a step further, a longitudinal study would be worthwhile to discover whether or not organizations' HR departments are able to maintain the role of strategic business partner throughout company changes, such as upper management changes, growth cycle changes, and periods of success and failure of a company.

This new role of HR as strategic business partner holds a great deal of prospect for the future of the function. The function has never before been held to such a high level. HR professionals can, for the first time in history, have a direct and powerful influence on the future of their organization. Along with this potential, is also a great deal of responsibility. HR will be accountable for having a positive impact on the bottom line. HR professionals may use this study, and future research, to help them prepare for the challenge of truly being a strategic business partner.

References

- Anfuso, D. (1994, December). AT&T connects HR and business leaders for success. Personnel Journal, 73, 84 - 89.
- Anfuso, D. (1994, May). Merck's prescription for joint ventures. Personnel Journal, 73, 64-67.
- Caudron, S. (1994, August). HR leaders brainstorm the profession's future. Personnel Journal, 73, 54-61.
- Caudron, S. (1991, November). Strategic HR at First Chicago. Personnel Journal, 70, 50 - 56.
- Corporate Leadership Council. (1995). Vision of the future: role of Human Resources in the new corporate headquarters. The Advisory Board Company.
- Fitz-Enz, J. (1990). Human Value Management: The Value-Adding Human Resource Management Strategy for the 1990s. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Greengard, S. (1994, July). New technology is HR's route to reengineering. Personnel Journal, 73, 32a - 32o.
- HR at Hewlett-Packard marries the best of old and new approaches. (1993, January). Personnel Journal, 72, 52-53.
- Keller, R. & Thomas, W. (1996, Winter). Breaking through the contemporary view of HR redesign. Coopers & Lybrand: hr advisory, IV (1), 18-24.
- Laabs, J.J. (1992, December). HR's vital role at Levi Strauss. Personnel Journal, 71, 34 - 46.
- Laabs, J.J. (1995a, June). Put your job on the line: Drive change by partnering with line managers: Here's how. Personnel Journal, 74, 74-88.
- Laabs, J.J. (1995b, August). Shrinking pains cause HR to redevelop talents. Personnel Journal, 74, 78-82.

Lissak, R.I. (1995). Outsourcing benefits administration - Implementing the different approaches. Employee Benefit Plan Review, 5, 26-38.

Martinez, M.N. (1995, November). Reengineering transforms HR. HRMagazine, 40, 18-20.

Pasqualetto, J. (1993, January). New competencies define the HRIS Manager's future role. Personnel Journal, 72, 91-99.

Pringle, E.G. (1995, June). The advantages of benefits outsourcing. Risk Management, 42, 61-64.

Raimy, E. (1995, June). 'Strat planning' in the trenches. Human Resources Executive, 9, 20-25.

Raimy, E. (1996, April). Under the microscope. Human Resources Executive, 10, 28-37.

Schoeppel, C. (1995, December). What does the CEO want? Training & Development, 49, 11-12.

Shadovitz, D. (1996, October). Jac in the pulpit. Human Resources Executive, 10, 55-56.

Stuart, P. (1992, April). HR and operations work together at Texas Instruments. Personnel Journal, 71, 64 - 68.

Talbott, S.P. (1994, October). How HR keeps current in century-old companies. Personnel Journal, 73, 86 - 94.

The Hackett Group. (1995). Best Practices Benchmark Study of Human Resources [Brochure]. Hackett, G.: Author.

Yeung, A. & Brockbank, W. (1995) Reengineering HR through information technology. Human Resource Planning, 18, 24-37.

Appendix

Questionnaire

Below is a list of statements which address the role of Human Resources in organizations. Please read each statement and respond to it using the instructions below. Answer the items as accurately and honestly as you can - there are no right or wrong answers, and no one else will know how you answered.

Using the 6 point scale below, to what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements? Please write the number indicating your level of agreement/disagreement in the space provided.

+ -----	+ -----	+ -----	+ -----	+ -----	+
0	1	2	3	4	5
Does Not Apply	Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Undecided	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree

"Management" refers to upper-level management, i.e., executives.

- _____ 1. I have a clear understanding of the needs of my company.
- _____ 2. HRIS is a key component of the HR department in my company .
- _____ 3. I work directly with line managers.
- _____ 4. Management does not see HR as a strategic business partner.
- _____ 5. HR personnel are involved in decisions that have an impact on my company's future.
- _____ 6. Management supports HR's efforts to become a strategic business partner.
- _____ 7. I usually hear about key business decisions after they have been made.
- _____ 8. Outsourcing of HR services in my company allows me to have more time to devote to becoming a strategic business partner.
- _____ 9. Employees access the HRIS to update their own personal information.
- _____ 10. I have a clear understanding of the issues my company faces.

- _____ 11. I am invited to meetings where key business strategies are discussed.
- _____ 12. The HR department is thought highly of within my company.
- _____ 13. Some of my department's administrative tasks are outsourced.
- _____ 14. Employees have on-line access to HR information.
- _____ 15. Outsourcing of key tasks may lead to a lack of work for HR employees.
- _____ 16. I believe I am viewed as credible by the employees in my company.
-

Current literature states the role of the HR function in organizations is changing today. The role is said to be less of an administrative role and more of a strategic business partner.

Please answer the following questions, providing as much information as you are comfortable with sharing. Feel free to write on the back, if you need additional space.

1. Do you agree that the role of the HR function is changing from an administrative role to more of a strategic business partner? _____ yes
 _____ somewhat
 _____ no

If yes or somewhat, why do you believe this trend is occurring?

2. Do you feel your HR department is a strategic business partner?
 _____ yes
 _____ somewhat
 _____ no

If you answered "no" to Question 2, go to Question 10.

3. What strategies has your department used in becoming a strategic business partner? *Mark all that apply.*

_____ Outsourcing _____ HRIS
 _____ Attending meetings where key business strategies are discussed
 _____ Developing partnerships between HR department and line managers
 _____ Other(s) _____

4. What strategies have you heard other HR departments using to become strategic business partners? *Mark all that apply.*

_____ Outsourcing _____ HRIS
 _____ Attending meetings where key business strategies are discussed
 _____ Developing partnerships between HR department and line managers
 _____ Other(s) _____

5. What factors may contribute to the success of the strategies you indicated in Questions 3 and 4?

Strategy	Factors of Success
----------	--------------------

6. What factors may contribute to the failure of the strategies you indicated in Questions 3 and 4?

Strategy	Factors of Failure
----------	--------------------

7. Indicate the functions being outsourced by your company, or other companies of which you know. *Mark all that apply.*

_____ Benefit Administration
_____ COBRA Administration
_____ Stock Administration
_____ Other(s) _____

8. As you have worked to become a strategic business partner, have you had to overcome management resistance or pessimism? _____ yes
_____ somewhat
_____ no

If yes or somewhat, how did you and your department handle it?

9. Have you heard other stories in which HR departments have overcome management resistance to their efforts to become strategic business partners? Please describe.

After completing Question 9, skip 10 - 12.

10. Would you like your HR department to be a strategic business partner?

_____ yes
_____ somewhat
_____ no

Reason: _____

11. If you answered "yes" to Question 10, what strategies for becoming a strategic business partner would you like to implement?

_____ Outsourcing _____ HRIS
_____ Attending meetings where key business strategies are discussed
_____ Developing partnerships between HR department and line managers
_____ Other(s) _____

12. If your department has made efforts to become a strategic business partner, what strategies have you used and what barriers have limited your success?

Strategy	Barrier of Success
_____	_____
_____	_____

OPTIONAL

I may wish to contact you to discuss your responses in more detail. If you are willing to discuss this survey with me, please provide the following information (or attach your business card):

Name _____

Phone Number _____

Business Address _____

Company Name _____

E-mail Address _____

Is there anyone else you would recommend I contact? May I use your name as the source?

Name _____

Phone Number _____

Company Name _____

The following is a series of questions about yourself and your background. Please read each question and mark or write the appropriate response. Again, please answer each of the questions to the best of your ability. Your responses will be held in confidence.

1. Age (in years):

- _____ Less than 18
- _____ 19 - 29
- _____ 30 - 39
- _____ 40 - 49
- _____ 50 - 59
- _____ 60+

2. Gender:

- _____ Female
- _____ Male

3. What is the highest level of education you have completed?

- _____ Attended high school
- _____ High school graduate
- _____ Attended college
- _____ College graduate (4-year degree)
- _____ Attended training/vocational school
- _____ Post-graduate study

4. If you attended college, what was your major?

5. What is your current or most recent position/job title?

6. How long have you been in your current position (in years)? _____

7. How long have you been in HR (in years)? _____
8. How many employees does your company have? _____
9. How many employees are in your HR department? _____ # Full-time employees
_____ # Part-time employees
10. What is the title of the most senior HR person in your company?

11. To whom does the most senior HR person in your company report?

12. What is your company's industry? _____

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME AND ASSISTANCE