

CORNELL HR REVIEW

HR: MORE THAN A GLORIFIED PARTY PLANNER

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Human Resources as a function is not broadly recognized for the significant role that it plays in the development and execution of corporate business strategy because, in many cases, it plays more of a facilitator role than a director role. In order to increase the credence given to HR on the macro level, practitioners need to play a more active role in the promotion of HR as a career. The approach to increase brand equity on a micro level should include HR practitioners on a more local level having a strong presence in the local community. Giving people a clearer idea of what HR is and what it can actually do, not only to add value to the company but also to make employees outside of HR more effective, will lead to an across-the-board increase in the respect given to HR practitioners.

The main reason that the role of HR has become so misunderstood is because when HR is done well it is easy to give the credit for the overall success of the company, program, or individual to other parties. HR ensures that the parties that will be able to bring the most to the table are there and prepared when business strategy is being created through the training and development of leadership. Through succession planning, HR makes certain that the company will not experience loss in profitability when the leaders of the company retire or leave the company. By designing leadership development programs, recruiting, on-boarding, retaining, and deploying the company's talent, HR leads the way in building the company's talent pool for the future. HR attracts and retains the most talented professionals in the field through well-thought-out and researched compensation strategies, and it owns and manages the culture of the company, which contributes significantly to each employee's decision to remain with the company. In many regards, members of the HR department are the unsung heroes of the corporate world because the vast majority of the population only notices when HR is not doing its job.

On the macro level, HR practitioners need to put more effort into trumpeting the success of programs they have designed or initiatives they have implemented citing the cost savings that they have brought about for the company. This can be done by highlighting accomplishments throughout their careers in the form of publications in scholarly and business journals, in more mainstream forms of media such as interviews with large newspapers and national news channels, and in various social media outlets (e.g., LinkedIn, Twitter). There are often articles and books published by experts in other fields such as marketing, finance, general management, etc. If HR wants to receive the same kind of recognition, it needs to put forth the same amount of effort to be heard. More and more readers are turning to the Internet and to social media as their primary source of information—having a strong presence in social media to promote the usefulness of HR would help to change antiquated perceptions. Providing people unfamiliar with the

function a clearer picture of the job responsibilities, like actively promoting career possibilities in HR via college and career prep forums and other sources that younger people are tapping into as resources for help with career path decisions, would also help.

Attempting to change the perceptions of people who have been in the workplace for an extended period of time is difficult and has little upside. On the other hand, focusing efforts on the minds of those that have less work experience and helping them to see the current situation as well as the currently underutilized potential of HR will bear a much sweeter fruit. There are HR practitioners in nearly every location around the world, but little is being done to encourage young students to look in to HR as a potential career option. Having a stronger relationship with junior high, high school, and undergraduate institutions and being available to students to provide information about the wide variety of career opportunities that are available in the human resources field will help strengthen the brand image of HR on the micro level. There are not as many applicants to HR programs and people interested in becoming HR professionals solely because they do not know the great deal of variation that can be found while remaining within one department in a company as well as the respectable compensation that can be attained while pursuing this career.

By having the many successful professionals make a national effort to promote the function and the local professionals play a more active role in their communities promoting their career, the brand equity of the HR function will be significantly increased at both the macro and micro level. It is the belief of the author that effective management of a company's human resources will become increasingly more important over time. The companies that recognize the importance of their human capital will be the ones that are able to gain a competitive advantage over the rest through strategic planning with the HR department. ✎

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