



Acquisition Learning Facilitation Coaching

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Have you evolved? OR Is HR a “necessary evil” in your organization?

The Human Resources function has seen an amazing evolution over the last 20 years. Initially organizations needed someone to keep organized records of their employee’s journey, and so we had the advent of Personnel Officers. The nice people that may have done an initial interview with you, sent all the other people regret letters, made sure that the personnel files were kept in order, and that payroll had the correct information to pay employees accurately and on time. The opinions of these people were not heard and line management took care of the rest.

As employees and employment law evolved, a certain level of expertise was required. Still, the HR team was largely responsible for keeping line management out of trouble and making sure that the files were kept in order, and that reporting was done as required. Little attention was given to the impact or opinions of this support function.

Sadly, in many organizations, this is where the evolution has stopped and the HR function is still deemed to be a necessary evil.

Some organizations saw the light, and have realised that the Human Resources or Human Capital function, needs to be a strategic business partner to ensure sustainability and to drive the bottom line of the business.

In the most successful organizations, the move has been to invest in talent; develop, coach and mentor employees rather than to cut headcount or rationalise the business from a people perspective when trouble strikes. This is often the first place that organizations look to cut costs, usually to the detriment of the customers that the business serves.

Many HR leaders in business today are still learning how to be that strategic partner, in fact just those words leave them having sleepless nights. This is not a skill that you learn at university or college.

The HR leader has (or should have) outstanding knowledge of the labour law, should know how to design and implement a world class recruitment and retention system. The implementation of a performance management system that will drive engagement and business performance is essential to gain credibility. In addition, the ability to deal with the onerous legislative requirements from an employment law and reporting perspective is a given. In some organizations, the Learning and Development team also reports into the Human Resources lead and this is an additional component that evolves over time and can drive the business to greater success if aligned strategically.

It is critical that these components are all integrated into to the strategic plan of the business.

The operational side of the business is often a mysterious place for HR practitioners. They see the long hours, the complicated financial discussions and ongoing pressures to drive revenues and cut costs. Strong HR leaders will make it their job to understand “the business of the business”. Only once this is done, will HR be respected as a strategic business partner.

Coaching and mentoring are critical interventions for line and operational management. HR specialists also need this kind of support to ensure that they can become a part of the team that determines the strategy, as well as support the strategy, with clearly defined and measurable business objectives. This will result in HR being a strategic business partner and that is evolution!