

## CAHRS Working Group Evolving Role of the HRBP

Hosted by Archer Daniels Midland  
Chicago | April 11, 2018

### Participating Organizations:

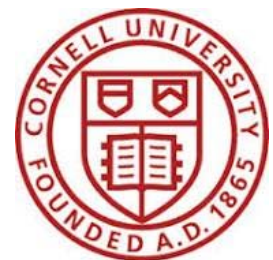
Archer Daniels Midland  
Boeing  
CDW  
Caterpillar  
Corning  
Cornell University  
Ecolab  
Estée Lauder  
General Electric  
General Mills  
IBM  
Johnson Controls  
Procter & Gamble  
Protective Life  
Prudential  
SC Johnson  
Stanley Black & Decker  
UnitedHealth Group  
Workday

### Key Takeaways:

1. Almost all companies are going through some stage of transforming the HR operating model. The success of this depends as much on HR leaders adhering to the new model as it does on implementing a Human Capital Management systems and skilling up line managers.
2. We should challenge ourselves to be business leaders, not HR business partners. This requires a mindset shift for HR as well as investing in ways to build business capability and confidence.
3. HR needs to rethink its role in the organization to better support constant change and the agile workforce. This requires new skills, capabilities and systems.

This working group focused on the role of the HR Business Partner and its evolution as the HR operating model transforms. Michael D'Ambrose (Senior Vice President and Chief Human Resources Officer at Archer Daniels Midland, host of meeting) opened the day by challenging the group on why we consider ourselves "partners" versus HR leaders and why CHROs are not usually on the CEO succession plan like CFOs, General Counsels and other C-suite leaders are. His purpose was to emphasize the importance of business leadership and he made the point about CEO succession to highlight the perceived gap between HR's view of "business acumen" vs. "business leadership". He also thought our focus should shift in the Talent space from individuals to teams — how can HR help predict the mix of people who together can create great results and grow the business? The group discussed reasons why CHROs may not be on CEO succession plans:

- Not sure many HR professionals actually want the job;
- 70/20/10 – we have not had the 70 (the right experiences);
- No dedicated HR for HR – lack of investment in HR development;



- HR is an enabling function – helping others all the time;
- HR Profile – comfortable in a #2 role;
- The “people” topic is not as respected as something technical – anyone can do the people job;
- We need to get away from using the “support” language;
- HR leaders are not required to produce the same results as other business functions (lack of scorecard, business measurement, Key Performance Indicators, etc;)
- HR needs to place bigger bets on its people and stretch HR talent; and
- Historical gender bias: 70% of HR professionals are women and there are not many women CEOs.

One last and perhaps most important reason is that if HR leaders were vying for CEO positions, their role as Trusted Advisors and Confidantes to others on the C-suite team would be at risk due to the competitive nature of getting to the CEO role.

## Building Business Capability in HR Leaders

Keying off those challenges, the group talked about ways HR leaders could build their business skills to move them from partners to leaders of the business. At times, HR is its own adversary here — we lack confidence when it comes to leading the business. Companies shared the following ways to build business capability:

- Hire people who are curious/learning agile;
  - Take ourselves out of the HR box – offer business solutions proactively;
  - Find ways to expose undergrad HR hires to the broader business early on (MBAs naturally get this);
  - Schedule webcasts on business strategy (not just HR strategy);
  - Read board decks and strategy documents; participate in shareholder calls;
  - Ensure there is a business update during staff meetings with HR team;
  - Be where the business is: if manufacturing, then at the plant; if sales, then ride-alongs;
  - Align HR practices with the business goals of the organization;
  - Collaborate with business leaders to co-author strategy papers;
  - Develop presentations for learning;
  - Be curious about the business — ask questions;
  - Build business skills — “Shark Tank” approach using ideas as products;
  - Require certification on key business strategies for HR (i.e. cloud-based technology, Bitcoin);
  - Set expectations around outside in thinking;
  - Put HR leaders in stretch assignments; and
-

- Involve HR in business roundtables at various sites.

## Enabling HRBPs Post-HR Transformation

Most companies present were in some stage of HR transformation. One of the hardest parts for the HRBP is transitioning from transactional work to focusing their time on more strategic things. The biggest barrier is HR itself — the model only works if the individuals adhere to it. We need to hold line leaders and ourselves accountable for the new model. New norms may need to be established. One company changed the definition of success from solving problems to how you are influencing. Another company adopted the “Frozen” theme song and sang out “Let It Go” to challenge adherence to old norms. We discussed some of the tools that can help support HRBPs:

- Implement HCM systems to support the organization;
- Teach managers how to fish and give them better tools to do it;
- Use things like changing your Performance Management system as an enabler;
- Share trends through analytics (i.e. turnover, engagement) and impact to the bottom line;
- Move from descriptive to prescriptive analytics (i.e. move from turnover to predicting quits);
- Leverage tools to assess leadership potential;
- Use tools to assess culture (survey Hi/Lo performers and see differences);
- Build the Employee Experience — look at data points/website hits to find pain points;
- Offer mandatory training in statistics and analytics (several companies mentioned 15 to 30 hours);
- Leverage internal resources to make the case for analytics (data scientists, market research, etc.) or test out having a PhD by offering an internship to one; and
- Re-contract with your line leaders about the new role of the HRBP and measure progress.

Another tool to support HRBP transformation is setting up centralized Employee Relations Groups. Several companies are either outsourcing, offshoring or standing up their own call centers to manage Tier 1 and Tier 2 employee relations activities (i.e. investigations, performance management, questions from line managers, etc.) While many companies express concern about implementing this, the four companies present who had ER centralized felt the change was much more positive than expected and had more benefits (consistency/expertise offered, freeing up HRBP time, etc.) than downfalls (not as high touch, impersonal, etc.) One more recent benefit mentioned was being able to measure risk across the organization by having these teams centralized (i.e. looking at sexual harassment risk across the enterprise given #MeToo).

## The Agile Workforce

As the workforce continues to change, HR is changing with it in ways it supports other parts of the organizations and transforms its own. HR needs to move from the role of rule keepers/enforcers to enabling the business to change through an evolve and iterate approach. This requires HR to build skills around collaboration. It also requires systems to change — compensation, performance management, etc. For example, instead of measuring performance on a yearly basis, take more of a project/product based approach with entrepreneurial teams, with more frequent/shorter work cycles.

Some ways to build agility within the HR system are:

- Build collaborative and consultative skills;
- Create Client Service roles to support HRBPs;
- Staff project work with project teams;

- Lead enterprise-wide programs/teams;
- Build flexible teams to swarm work when needed;
- Create the role of internal consultants for filling temporary needs; and
- Create partnerships with external vendors to provide gig talent.

One company shared the example of “Fast Action Groups.” These teams are tackling problems/creating programs by using design thinking and accelerate the activation of projects. They report to and are funded by HR but made up of cross-functional people and are additional resources to HR.

Reinventing culture is critical to support agility as well. Several companies mentioned moving this responsibility away from HR. A couple of examples of how companies are shifting:

1. One company encourages employees to post ideas on blogs, which are then voted on, by all employees. If greenlighted then that employee implements the idea.
2. Talent & Culture Teams used to reside in HR but are now cross-functional.

How HR communicates to employees is changing as well. HR needs to move away from heavy content. Some employees are rejecting things, returning them with “TLDR” stamped on it (too long, did not read). Other companies are implementing release management – communications goes through a central group before out to employees with a focus on branding, technology and design as well as length, readability and action-ability of the communication.

## Hot Topics for HR

The last thing the group discussed was a variety of topics that are newer to the HRBP plate:

- Transgender in the workplace;
- Digital transformation;
- Global mobilization;
  - ◇ Rotation programs (pick people first then the assignment)
  - ◇ Communication is important
  - ◇ Millennial talent is where to go
  - ◇ Upward mobility expectation
  - ◇ Special projects
  - ◇ Screen through recruiting process
  - ◇ Onboarding focus
- Global mindset;
- Immigration;

- Business transformation;
    - ◇ How do we create an organization that can change more rapidly?
    - ◇ Managing pace of changes
  - Litigation;
  - Inclusion;
    - ◇ Broader than diversity
    - ◇ Unconscious bias
  - Agile;
    - ◇ Experiences vs. Competencies
    - ◇ Constant change and flexibility
  - Stress of the current work environment; and
    - ◇ Building resiliency
    - ◇ Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, and Ambiguity
    - ◇ Work/Life harmonization
    - ◇ Mindfulness
    - ◇ Invest in me day – mental health day
      - ◆ Do whatever you want with no questions asked
  - Values
    - ◇ What is the company's position?
    - ◇ Politics
-

**This Summary Report was prepared by Beth Flynn-Ferry for use by participants of the Evolving Role of the HRBP Working Group.**

The Center for Advanced Human Resource Studies (CAHRS) is an international center serving corporate human resources leaders and their companies by providing critical tools for building and leading high performing HR organizations. CAHRS' mission is to bring together Partners and the ILR School's world-renowned HR Studies faculty to investigate, translate and apply the latest HR research into practice excellence.