CAHRS Working Group
The Evolving Role of the Human Resources Business Partner

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Participating Organizations

AstraZeneca
Barclays
Bloomberg
Chevron
Cornell University
HP
JPMorgan Chase
Mastercard
Optum
Shell

Key Takeaways:

1. Almost all companies are going through some form of transforming the HR operating model. This change results in a very different role for the Human Resources Business Partner (HRBP) but there is a need to focus on building out their capabilities for these new expectations.

2. As technology continues to advance, HR and Senior Leaders need to invest in developing their skills in this arena as well.

3. Companies continue to look at their performance management systems to evaluate their effectiveness. Fewer companies present were considering moving to no ratings but all are focused on more frequent discussions and minimizing labeling.

HR generalists who lead HR for large divisions face unique challenges. The role of the "Senior/Executive HR Business Partner" is evolving rapidly, making it more important than ever for these HR leaders to find new and innovative ways to solve their business challenges.

HR Capabilities

We began the discussion by reviewing some research CAHRS is doing on how the HR competencies change as the HRBP role evolves. As we discussed HRBP capabilities, the one that continues to need focus is building data fluency and insights (interpreting data and telling a story). It is unclear what HR's role with this task should be — is it consulting, coaching or advising? As technology continues to advance, what will this look like when there is more automation? Some felt that the people who tend to come into the HR function do not naturally like data and that is why they have chosen HR. However, if we can demystify the role that HR plays with data (i.e. translate it, tell the story versus the statistical end), then HRBPs can embrace this new capability.
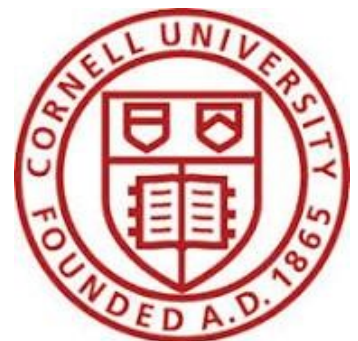
Division VP of HR — Current State

Key Roles & Responsibilities

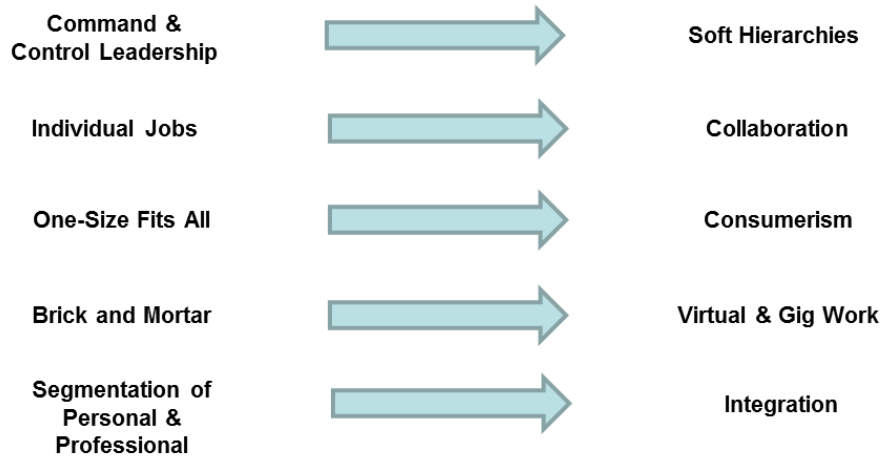|	
Organizational Effectiveness	Talent Management
Leadership Development	Coaching & Advising

Competencies & Capabilities

- Deep Understanding of Business and Industry
- Broad HR Functional Knowledge
- Change Leadership
- Strategic Talent Mindset
- People Management (Leading & Developing Others & Teams)
- Organizational Agility
- Complex Problem Solving
- Basic Project Management Skills & Practices
- Consultation Skills
- Facilitation and Coaching Skills

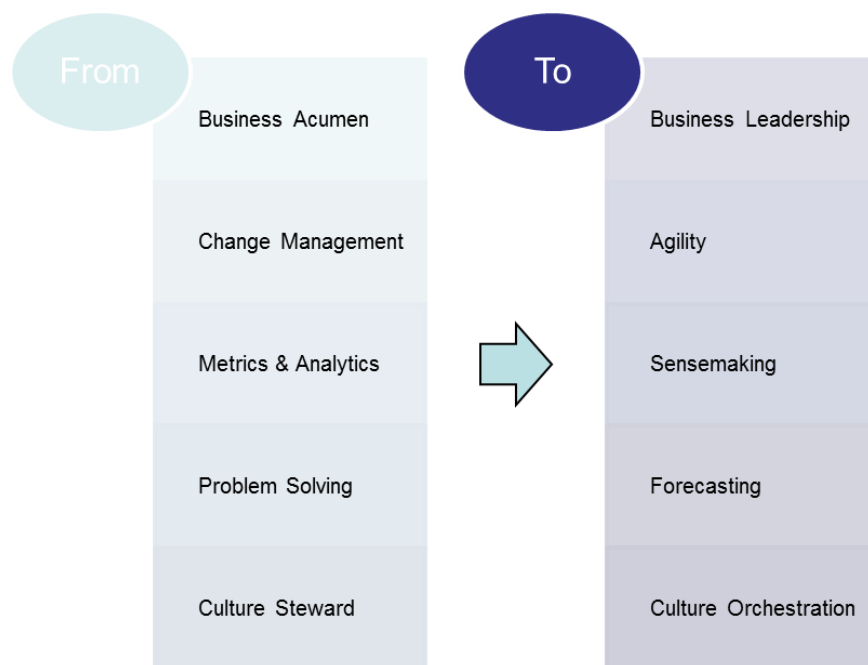## Traits & Personal Attributes

- Strategic & "Big Picture" Thinker
- Interpersonal Savvy
- Emotional Intelligence
- Customer & Service Focus
- Ethics & Integrity/Trusted Advisor
- Executive Presence/Ability to Impact & Influence
- Analytical
- Results Oriented

Future of Work Trends

- Cornell/CAHRS research predicts these macro trends will drive a number of changes in the nature of work:

Command & Control Leadership	→	Soft Hierarchies
Individual Jobs	→	Collaboration
One-Size Fits All	→	Consumerism
Brick and Mortar	→	Virtual & Gig Work
Segmentation of Personal & Professional	→	Integration

Division VP of HR — Current State

From

- Business Acumen
- Change Management
- Metrics & Analytics
- Problem Solving
- Culture Steward

To

- Business Leadership
- Agility
- Sensemaking
- Forecasting
- Culture Orchestration

HR Operating Model, Transformation, and Role of HRBP

We then talked through each company's current HR Operating Model. All companies present were working out of the HR Shared Services (HRSS), Centers of Excellence (COE) and HR Business Partner (HRBP) framework. All but one of the companies present were in the midst of HR transformation. However, they were at a variety of stages of change. One company mentioned that it had outsourced too much of its HRSS and lost the intimacy/understanding of its employees and were in the process of bringing things back internally. Another had run into too many mistakes when it had outsourced initially and backed off.

A typical transformation starts with the decision to move to a Human Capital Management (HCM) system such as Workday, and further build out HRSS groups that have previously been established by centralizing payroll and benefits but are now taking on more business processes for HR. This process then allows a true HRBP role where a senior HR leader is focused on a strategic agenda supporting a business team. Centers of Excellence (Resourcing, Learning Leadership & Talent, Rewards, Diversity & Inclusion, Employee Relations/Industrial Relations, etc.) are established to drive global processes and programs support them. One specialty area – Analytics – is taking a more prominent role as technology becomes more prevalent.

We next focused on the structure of the HRBP roles. HRBP to employee ratios ranged from 1:250 to 1:8000. Generally, each HRBP supported one Leadership Team; however, depending on the size or complexity of the business units, some HRBPs supported two to four. Many of these European-based companies are now using HR Consultants (HRC) or HR Advisors (HRA) to do the more entry-level, less complex and day-to-day HR generalist support. Some companies have HRCs or HRAs centralized; others have them aligned to a business. The HRBP title was reserved for the most senior leaders who sit on a C-suite level team and are dealing with more a more complex, global and strategic HR agenda.

Many companies are still figuring out the career path and development of HRBPs. Some companies continue to have the HRG role as an entry point. Other companies have HR Advisors or HR Consultants as the starting roles. One company did not have an internal talent pipeline and hired externally for the role. Another company had just created a Senior HR Advisor role to help HRGs with career progression into an HRBP role in the future.

Besides the changing career path, HRBP development is receiving additional focus. One company develops business partners across the functions (HR, Finance, Logistics, etc.) together since they face similar challenges and need similar skills. Another company is holding sessions on "What's a Day in the Life Like" – 30 minute brown bag sessions with Question & Answer about different roles.

Some of the companies had unique roles or features. One company had an Organizational Capability role sitting on each business team. They focused on strategic staffing, statistics, succession planning, job postings, etc. but were *not* connected to a COE. Another company had "hybridization" where their HRBPs were also specializing in COE areas to give them a variety of work.

Agility and HR

As the workforce continues to change, HR needs to change with it. Some ways to build agility within HR are:

- Innovation Change Agents – sit on a LT to help ask questions and point out what they are *not* thinking about;

- Reverse mentorship;

- Take a coding class to help shift mindsets;

- Hold Hackathons;

- Institute a growth mindset;

- Move away from presentations (perfect PowerPoint slides) to workshops;

- Use pilots; and

- Move from Advisor to Coach.

Senior Business Leaders and Changing Technology

One area of discussion was how to help senior business leaders keep up with the changes in technology so that they are more connected to their workers. Some of the ideas shared were:

- Leadership Intervention to change mindset of how to lead;

- Virtual Reality (VR) Experience – choose something that is unfamiliar (i.e. Homelessness) to provoke thinking differently;

- "Go Sees" – leaders shadow employees to get an appreciation for what they do;

- Reverse mentorship;

- 360 feedback – ability to rehearse safely/share failures with peers;

- Add junior technology leader as ex officio member of Leadership Team for mutual learnings; and

- Unconscious Bias training.

Diversity & Inclusion Initiatives

Another area of discussion was what practices companies are using that have a real impact on diversity and inclusion with an emphasis on gender and flexibility.

Female Leader Inclusion:

- Present a 50/50 slate of candidates – allows the conversation about gender to surface;

- Senior Leaders mentor external females with an eye towards future hiring;

- Provide drivers for female sales leaders in India due to safety concerns;

- Put female leaders in profit & loss (P&L) roles with no P&L experience; and

- Training on the role of the bystander in creating the right culture.

Flexibility:

- Dynamic Working – leaders open to where and how employees work (vs. Flexibility, which is more formal, written agreement, etc); and

- Parental Leave – United Kingdom statute permits parents to share the parental leave for birth of a child. None of the companies present had moved to parity for each parent and felt like that would not happen until a law was put in place for protection.

Performance Ratings

The companies discussed where each was with the Performance Management process. Two companies had moved to giving no performance ratings to their employees. Other companies were using a three of five point rating scale with more frequent feedback. Several companies had changed from a five point rating scale to a three-point scale (strong, on track, needs improvement) for the desired outcome that less emphasis was on the rating label (80% fall in the middle box) and more on the discussion. This is working but does make it more difficult to manage poor performers. In addition, with no ratings or three landing spots, nine-box and succession planning becomes much more important to differentiate for development. Another company was giving ratings but on four different dimensions, one dimension per quarter. They felt that having the multiple ratings across the year resulted in less focus on an overall rating (could be rated highly on one dimension and low on another, etc.). The same organization supplemented this with Organization Impact Reviews, which focused on business results and discussed who was most important to that success. They also gave money pools to the lowest manager level for distribution which increased accountability and communication of those increases to their employees. Another company was beginning to focus on Critical Roles vs. individuals in their succession planning process. However, a system should be set up to track early high potential talent who may not be on a succession chart.

HRBP Personal Development

We ended the session with a discussion on what HRBPs were doing for their own personal development. As the world continues to change quickly, so do the HRBP skills, capabilities, and the need to invest in this realm. Ideas included:

- Taking classes to build a new skill/capability (Accredited Coaching Course, Agile Program);

- Immersion in Digital / Technology (i.e. Virtual Reality or Coding class);

- Sharing learnings internally (Talent Roulette – spin the wheel and share what you're reading);

- Project Management experience;

- Investigating an international employee relations case;

- Sponsoring a project out of your area of expertise (i.e. Location Strategy);

- Mentoring females through an external group;

- Volunteering for a Curriculum Vitae Workshop for homeless clinic; and

- Reaching out to external peers to share.