

# Tapping into the **POWER** of Human Resources



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As a twenty-year plus HR executive, I've noticed that as professionals assemble their career development resources, which often include a coach, a mentor, a sponsor and of course your "ride or die" best friend to help you weather the ups and downs of climbing the corporate ladder, the value of an HR partnership is often overlooked.



**HR** is the division within an organization that creates the policies and crafts the framework that drives such things as compensation, promotions, succession planning, career development, and talent management decisions. However, the "power" of HR is derived from three major components: 1) access, 2) information and 3) influence.

Let's consider the first component, *access*. As stated above, HR is the architect of policies and programs that drive talent management decisions within an organization. As a result, HR is consulted when orga-

nizational restructuring is being considered, when right-sizing is contemplated, and when succession plans are implemented. HR's access to key influencers typically means they have a seat at the table when decisions are being discussed, debated and decided.

*Information*, is a critical element of the HR role. Two core HR responsibilities include creating policies and procedures and serving as the custodian of employee information, which includes work experience, educational achievements, and professional accomplishments as well as investigatory, disciplinary and

complaint information. Because HR knows the criteria business leaders should consider when making talent management decisions, HR can provide those leaders with relevant employee information and key policy guidance to facilitate more informed decisions.

Access and information provide HR with the opportunity to use the third component, *influence*. In this context, influence is defined as the capacity to have an effect on a given outcome. An effective HR Business Partner will use access and information to influence talent management decisions in a manner that creates equal opportunity, a more equitable playing field, and fair and balanced deliberation for every employee or job candidate.

Now, you may be thinking, "How can I build a strategic partnership and tap into these power components to aid my quest for upward mobility?" Consider the four suggestions below to help you build a strategic HR partnership:



**1. Engage HR in one-on-one meetings.** Schedule a meeting with HR to discuss your business challenges, to gain a better understanding of HR processes, or to provide feedback concerning HR services. Consider discussing professional development resources available through your employer or career coaching services which will also provide an opportunity for you to share your career aspirations. Don't wait to visit HR when you have a problem. Having a pre-established relationship before a problem arises will most likely work in your favor.

**2. Become involved in activities that expose you to HR.** Volunteer to serve on HR-led initiatives, including employee committees, charitable drives, or diversity affinity groups. Your participation will ensure HR has an opportunity to become more familiar with you. The more HR Business Partners are exposed to your professional strengths, the more equipped they will be to recommend you for various opportunities within the organization.

**3. Take advantage of professional development opportunities.** Attend in-house training. Use your company's tuition assistance program to pursue your education goals. Volunteer to participate in cross-departmental/divisional projects. Encourage your supervisor to assign you as the designee when he or she will be out of the office for extended periods. Using internal resources and opportunities will enhance your knowledge, skills and abilities and will increase HR's exposure to your qualifications.

**4. Demonstrate leadership courage.** Perhaps you have unknowingly stepped into a pre-existing problem or you believe company or ethical policies are being compromised. Don't hesitate to ask the tough questions and proactively voice your concerns. By bringing an issue to the attention of HR, you can frame the perception of the issue, and you can position yourself to gain additional information you might not otherwise receive.

believed she lacked the required MBA for the position. The HR Director provided the hiring manager with an updated list of qualified candidates and took the additional step to add each candidate's years of management experience, as well. Of all the candidates, Kari had the most management experience in addition to having an MBA. Kari was later contacted by the hiring manager to interview for the position. Also, the HR Director was concerned as to whether managers were providing employees with salary range information per recent changes to the company's compensation policy. The company had historically only provided salary range information to managers. To ensure the company was adhering to the policies and to resolve Kari's issue, the HR Director uploaded salary range information into the employee Human Resources Information System (HRIS) and sent a company-wide email to communicate the system's self-service features. This informed managers of the change and made it easier for employees to access their own salary ranges.

After implementing the above suggestions, you may never know directly, how your HR partnership has advanced your career. Consider the following example:

After three years of employment as a marketing analyst, Kari moved into an office near the HR Suite. On several occasions, Kari chatted with the HR Director in the break room over coffee and shared that she had just completed her MBA, had several years of prior management experience, and was looking for opportunities to transition from the Marketing group into

the Finance group. Kari also shared that at a previous job, salary ranges were shared with all employees, but when she asked her manager for the information she was told that salary ranges were confidential.

As a result of these interactions, Kari was unaware of the following series of events. The HR Director knew that a management position within the Finance group was becoming available due to a pending retirement. Kari had been excluded from the short list of possible candidates to assume the role because the hiring manager

The above example illustrates how HR can influence outcomes and address workplace issues. It also illustrates that a partnership with HR, in most instances, will not include a two-way dialogue. HR has an obligation of confidentiality, a cornerstone trait of an effective HR Business Partner. You may never know how your strategic partnership with HR may have assisted you because HR's influence often remains unpublicized. So, whether you have direct knowledge or not of the benefits of implementing any of the four suggestions, be sure to tap into the power of HR as you advance in your career.

# If Companies Can Change Their Brand, Why Can't You?

By Dannielle Hawk and Dr. Jimmy Davis, CALIBR8 Leadership Development Coaches



## INTRO

With the rapid pace of technology and global change, it is hard to overlook when a company rebrands itself to remain relevant in the marketplace. When we think of established companies like IBM, Capital One, and McDonald's, we can link their rebranding efforts to the evolving desires of their customers and shareholders. These companies needed to change in order to address the new needs of their markets, and, in some cases, the companies changed markets altogether. Consider the classic example of IBM. In the beginning, IBM's core mainframe business had been disrupted by the advent of the personal computer and the client server. IBM couldn't compete with smaller, nimbler, less diversified competitors, which resulted in an \$8.10 billion loss for the 1992 financial year. This was the largest loss a company had ever sustained in U.S. history. In order to survive the market, IBM needed to rebrand itself to focus on its strengths, mainly its ability to provide integrated solutions for customers instead of computer parts and components. With that shift, IBM was able to rebrand itself to survive the market changes and become profitable again.

Rebranding can also follow a high-profile stumble that tarnishes a company's reputation. Companies like Uber and Samsung are working hard to change the perception of what their brand now means in the marketplace. Like these companies, many of our CALIBR members find themselves wanting or needing to rebrand themselves. During coaching sessions, it is common to hear phrases like:

- "I don't want to be seen as tactical – I want to be seen as strategic."
- "I can see where the company is going. It's not a good fit for me. I need to shift lanes to make myself more marketable on the outside."
- "I didn't hit that last project out of the park. I need to rebuild the confidence of my peers and leaders."

### The Psychological Contract of Work

In our parents and grandparents' generations, workers often studied or specialized in one skill. They joined one company and stayed there until retirement. The psychological contract of work was simple. That is no longer the case. Now the psychological contract of work includes multiple careers where the agreement between employee and employer stays consistent until one of the parties decides there is no longer a benefit to the relationship. As a result, companies do not have the same loyalty to employees that they had in previous decades, and today's employees only remain at a company if it is in their best interest. Studies now show that it is not uncommon for individuals

to have multiple careers throughout their lives, with each career lasting 3-4 years (sometimes longer). Thus, in today's climate, the need to constantly rebrand and improve your skills is vitally important.

### What Is My Brand?

Before thinking about a rebranding effort, however, you must first assess the current state of your brand. Similar to corporations like Google and Apple,

your name and image has a value in the marketplace based on the quality of your work, the relationships that you have, and your overall reputation. By understanding your value, specifically how you are perceived by your colleagues, your superiors, and even your friends and family, you will be better equipped to rebrand yourself as necessary to thrive in the market. Below is a brief list of possible questions to ask yourself as you assess your personal brand.

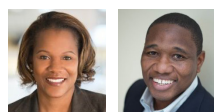
What brands/skills are represented on my resume? Consider your degrees, schools, civic organizations, companies, and the locations you've worked in.

- What has consistently been said about me in my performance reviews?
- What knowledge or special skills do I have that allow me to stand out among my colleagues?

### What Should I Do Next?

If you have recently departed from a company or if you are actively deciding to rebrand yourself to make a career change, below are a few more questions to consider.

- What skills are necessary for the job that I want?
- What skills do I have that translate to other professions?
- What can I do at my current employer to gain new skills?
- How do I leverage my network in order to begin the process of discussing a career transition?



Dannielle Hawk and Dr. Jimmy Davis are CALIBR Coaches who specialize in helping leaders develop their executive presence and collaborative leadership skills.

To learn more about CALIBR8 coaching, please email [info@mycalibr.com](mailto:info@mycalibr.com)