

Rediscovering Talent



Introduction: The Paradox of HR Talent

Human Resources (HR) is often viewed as the backbone of any organization, yet it remains one of the most misunderstood and underutilized domains in the corporate world. While HR professionals are responsible for attracting, retaining, and developing talent, their own career paths are often fraught with uncertainty, misconceptions, and an ever-evolving set of expectations. Many individuals enter the HR domain with high hopes, only to find themselves questioning their career moves later. But what if the real issue isn't HR itself but the way we approach career decisions within it?

This essay delves deep into the journey of HR professionals, the expectations versus reality, the challenges of career transitions, the impact of wrong decisions, and how individuals can redefine their path within HR. By weaving real-life experiences, industry statistics, and case studies, this piece aims to shed light on the reservoir of untapped potential within HR and how we can unlock it.

The Dream vs. Reality of an HR Career

Many young professionals enter HR with a vision of being the key drivers of organizational success, shaping work cultures, and fostering employee engagement. The reality, however, often clashes with these expectations. HR professionals frequently find themselves caught in a whirlwind of administrative tasks, compliance issues, and cost-cutting measures rather than people-centric strategies.

A study by the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) in 2023 found that 68% of HR professionals feel that their role is undervalued within their organization. Many HR executives report experiencing burnout, as they juggle

between talent acquisition, employee relations, compliance management, and strategic planning, often with limited support and resources.

So, where does the problem lie? One of the biggest misconceptions is that HR is a "soft" function—one that requires little technical expertise and is merely about handling people. The truth is, modern HR is a data-driven, technology-dependent field that requires analytical skills, business acumen, and strategic foresight.

The Challenge of Career Transitions and Wrong Decisions

Changing careers within HR—or transitioning from another field into HR—can be daunting. Many professionals struggle with questions like: *Am I making the right move? Is this role truly aligned with my strengths? Will I regret this decision five years from now?*

Consider the story of Rohan, a mid-career professional who transitioned from operations to HR, thinking it would give him more work-life balance. Within two years, he found himself buried under compliance documents, endless employee grievances, and unrealistic expectations from management. He later admitted, "I thought HR was about people and relationships, but I underestimated the political and administrative load."

Wrong career moves in HR are not uncommon. According to a LinkedIn survey in 2022, nearly 45% of HR professionals who switched roles within HR regretted their decision within a year. Often, this regret stems from inadequate research, misaligned expectations, or failure to understand the specialized nature of different HR roles—such as talent acquisition, HR analytics, or learning and development.

Choosing the Right Path in HR

So how do you choose the right career move in HR? The answer lies in self-awareness, skill assessment, and market research.

- **Self-Assessment:** Identify your core strengths—are you more analytical, relationship-driven, or process-oriented? HR has multiple verticals, from data-driven HR analytics to emotionally intense employee relations. Choosing the right fit makes all the difference.
- **Market Research:** The HR landscape is evolving rapidly with AI-driven recruitment, remote work models, and employer branding. Understanding industry trends can help professionals make informed decisions.
- **Mentorship:** Seek guidance from seasoned HR leaders who can provide real-world insights into different career paths.

What Should HR Professionals Look Forward To?

Despite its challenges, HR offers unparalleled opportunities for those who embrace its evolution. The future of HR is dynamic, with trends such as:

- **HR Tech and AI:** Automation is transforming talent acquisition, onboarding, and employee engagement. HR professionals with digital skills will be in high demand.
- **Strategic HR Leadership:** Companies are recognizing HR as a core business function rather than a support role. HR leaders are now part of executive decision-making.
- **DEI and Employee Well-being:** Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) are gaining traction, pushing HR to redefine work cultures.
- **Gig Economy & Remote Work:** The traditional employment model is shifting, and HR professionals must adapt to managing contingent workforces.

The Emotional Toll of HR Careers

One often overlooked aspect of HR careers is the emotional toll they take on professionals. Handling employee grievances, negotiating terminations, and maintaining a positive work culture while facing organizational pressures can lead to significant mental stress. Studies have shown that HR professionals experience higher levels of workplace burnout compared to other corporate functions. A 2023 report by Gallup found that 54% of HR professionals reported high stress levels, with 36% considering a career change due to emotional exhaustion. Organizations must recognize this and invest in well-being programs specifically tailored for HR teams, ensuring that those who take care of employees also receive adequate support.

Bridging the Gap Between Expectations and Reality

One of the most effective ways to bridge the gap between expectations and reality in HR careers is through better education and realistic job previews. Many HR professionals enter the field with only a theoretical understanding of people management, often finding themselves unprepared for the complexities of legal compliance, organizational behavior, and strategic workforce planning. Universities and professional training institutes must update their curriculum to reflect the evolving demands of the field, incorporating real-world case studies, hands-on experience, and mentorship opportunities. Companies, too, must provide clearer job descriptions and onboarding processes to set accurate expectations for HR roles.

The Role of Leadership in Cultivating HR Talent

Leadership plays a pivotal role in shaping HR careers and ensuring the profession is respected and valued within organizations. Senior executives must move beyond seeing HR as merely a support function and instead recognize it as a strategic pillar essential to business success. This shift requires fostering a culture where HR professionals have a voice at the leadership table, are provided with continuous learning opportunities, and are encouraged to think innovatively. Organizations that invest in leadership development within HR are more likely to build resilient workforces and retain top HR talent, ultimately driving long-term business growth.

Solutions to Navigating Career Moves in HR

- **Specialization Over Generalization:** Rather than being a jack-of-all-trades, HR professionals should build expertise in a niche, be it HR tech, organizational development, or compensation and benefits.
- **Continuous Learning:** Certifications like SHRM, CIPD, or HR analytics courses can help professionals stay competitive.
- **Networking:** Building connections within and outside HR can open unexpected doors and provide career clarity.

Conclusion: Unlocking the Reservoir of Untapped Talent

HR is not just about hiring and firing—it is about enabling businesses and employees to thrive. The problem is not that HR lacks potential but that many professionals fail to recognize the diverse opportunities it offers. Career transitions, wrong decisions, and frustrations are all part of the journey, but with the right strategies, HR professionals can carve out fulfilling careers.

The untapped reservoir of HR talent lies in those who are willing to step out of traditional molds, embrace technology, specialize, and advocate for HR's strategic role in business. The question is—are we ready to redefine HR for the future?

References:

1. Society for Human Resource Management (2023). *The State of HR: Navigating a Shifting Workforce*.
2. LinkedIn Talent Report (2022). *Career Transitions in HR: What Works and What Fails?*
3. Harvard Business Review (2021). *The Evolving Role of HR in Business Strategy*.

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Notes:

1. PPL who want to pursue career in hr.
2. PPL who are already in hr and want to transition from 1 focus area to another
3. People who come from operations / it / marketing wanting to make a career in hr - they think they can make a career in hr
4. Stuck on career in HR. they are moving from org to org for money. How does a person leapfrog from one role to another
5. Want to set up a I& d company / recruitment cop- what do we say?

The Philosophy Behind Choosing a Career in Any Field

Choosing a career isn't just about job security or financial stability—it's about aligning your strengths, passions, and long-term aspirations with the work you do every day. The right career choice should fulfill three key principles:

1. **Passion & Interest:** Do you genuinely enjoy and find meaning in the work? A career should be something you are curious about and eager to grow in.
2. **Skill & Strengths Alignment:** Are you naturally good at the core functions of the field? If not, are you willing to develop those skills?
3. **Market Demand & Growth Potential:** Does this field offer long-term career opportunities and room for advancement?

1. Pursuing a Career in HR - yet to be added: how can a person from a different field pursue this?

Introduction: Human Resources (HR) is at the core of any organization, focusing on talent management, employee engagement, and organizational development. A career in HR offers diverse opportunities, from recruitment and training to compensation, benefits, and corporate strategy. If you have a passion for working with people, solving organizational challenges, and driving company culture, HR can be a rewarding career choice.

What Should You Do? If you want to pursue a career in HR, start by understanding the fundamental areas of HR such as talent acquisition, employee relations, compliance, and performance management. Gain relevant education through a degree in HR, business, or psychology. Certifications such as SHRM, HRCI, or CIPD can add credibility to your profile. Practical experience through internships, projects, or HR-related roles will provide hands-on exposure to real-world HR challenges.

Why Should You Do It? HR professionals play a crucial role in shaping an organization's culture, retaining top talent, and ensuring smooth operations. The demand for skilled HR professionals is growing as businesses recognize the importance of employee experience and data-driven HR strategies. A career in HR can offer long-term stability, career growth, and opportunities to influence workplace transformation.

How to Get Started? Begin by networking with HR professionals, attending industry events, and staying updated on HR trends. Leverage LinkedIn, HR blogs, and online courses to build industry knowledge. Volunteering for HR-related tasks in your current job or university projects can also be beneficial. Additionally, developing strong communication, problem-solving, and people management skills will help you excel in the field.

A great example of someone who successfully pursued a career in HR is **Laszlo Bock**, the former Senior Vice President of People Operations at Google.

Case Study: Laszlo Bock's Journey into HR

Laszlo Bock started his career in consulting and business operations before transitioning into HR. He earned a degree in International Relations from Pomona College and later pursued an MBA from Yale. Although his early roles were not strictly in HR, he developed strong analytical, leadership, and problem-solving skills, which became valuable when he transitioned into the HR domain.

What He Did to Succeed:

1. **Education & Skill Building:** Bock studied business strategy and analytics, which helped him understand the intersection of HR and organizational growth.
2. **Cross-Functional Experience:** Before entering HR, he worked in management consulting, where he learned about business operations, leadership dynamics, and workforce efficiency.
3. **Strategic Networking:** He connected with HR and leadership professionals, learning about trends in talent management and employee engagement.
4. **Innovation in HR:** At Google, Bock revolutionized HR by introducing **data-driven people analytics**, ensuring that HR decisions were made based on insights rather than just intuition.

Why His Journey is Relevant:

- He demonstrated that HR is not just about hiring but also about **business impact and strategy**.
- He used **technology and data** to modernize HR functions, setting a new industry benchmark.
- His work at Google inspired a shift towards **evidence-based HR practices**, which are now widely adopted across industries.

Takeaway for Aspiring HR Professionals:

If you want to build a strong career in HR:

- **Develop business acumen** to understand how HR aligns with company goals.
- **Gain diverse experience** through internships, projects, or cross-functional roles.
- **Stay innovative**—use data, psychology, and technology to improve workforce management.

2. Transitioning from One HR Focus Area to Another

Introduction: HR is a broad field with multiple specialized areas, including talent acquisition, employee engagement, learning and development (L&D), HR analytics, and compliance. Transitioning within HR can open up new career opportunities and enhance professional growth.

What Should You Do? If you're considering a transition, first identify the skills and knowledge required for the new HR focus area. Conduct research, take up relevant certifications, and seek mentorship from experienced professionals in that domain. Gain hands-on experience by volunteering for cross-functional HR projects within your organization.

Why Should You Do It? Expanding your HR expertise makes you more versatile and valuable in the industry. Specialization in high-demand HR fields such as HR analytics or organizational development can increase career advancement opportunities. Furthermore, transitioning can help prevent career stagnation and keep your job role dynamic and engaging.

How to Make It Happen? Build transferable skills, such as communication, analytical thinking, and leadership. Work on small projects in the new domain before making a full transition. Network with professionals in the field to learn best practices and stay updated with industry trends. Consider pursuing a certification or course in the new HR focus area to strengthen your credibility.

3. Transitioning to HR from Operations, IT, or Marketing

Introduction: Many professionals from operations, IT, or marketing develop an interest in HR because of their experience in people management, employee training, or organizational strategy. A career switch to HR is possible, but it requires a structured approach.

What Should You Do? Start by identifying HR functions that align with your current skills. For example, an operations manager may transition into HR operations, while a marketing professional may explore employer branding or talent acquisition. Upskilling through HR courses and certifications is essential. Gaining experience in people-related projects can also help.

Why Should You Do It? Your background in another domain brings unique strengths to HR. For example, IT professionals can excel in HR analytics, and marketing experts can contribute to employee engagement strategies. The ability to bridge business functions with HR makes transitioning professionals highly valuable to organizations.

How to Make the Move? Seek out HR-related responsibilities in your current job, such as employee engagement initiatives or recruitment collaboration. Network with HR professionals and explore mentorship programs. Consider part-time HR courses or certification programs to build foundational knowledge. Look for opportunities to transition internally within your company before applying for external HR roles.

4. Breaking Career Stagnation in HR

Introduction: Many HR professionals find themselves stuck in lateral job moves, shifting from company to company for salary increases but lacking real career progression. Breaking this cycle requires a strategic approach.

What Should You Do? Focus on gaining leadership skills and working on high-impact projects. Seek roles that expand your responsibilities, such as HR business partnering or strategic workforce planning. Upskilling in HR technology, data analytics, and organizational development can set you apart from other candidates.

Why Should You Do It? Without career advancement, job satisfaction can decline. Transitioning from a transactional HR role to a strategic position can lead to higher job satisfaction, influence, and salary potential. Employers value HR leaders who can align talent strategy with business goals.

How to Leapfrog to the Next Level? Network with senior HR leaders to gain insights and mentorship. Take on cross-functional projects that showcase your ability to drive business impact. Develop expertise in data-driven HR practices. Consider an MBA or advanced certification to increase your credibility and leadership potential.

5. Setting Up an L&D or Recruitment Firm

Introduction: Starting an HR-related business, such as a Learning & Development (L&D) or recruitment firm, requires strategic planning and a deep understanding of market needs.

What Should You Do? Identify your niche—whether it's executive recruitment, soft skills training, or digital learning solutions. Conduct market research to understand industry demands. Build a strong brand presence online and network with industry leaders to gain initial traction.

Why Should You Do It? Entrepreneurship in HR can be highly rewarding, offering financial growth and industry influence. Companies are investing more in specialized L&D and recruitment services to gain a competitive edge.

How to Get Started? Develop a business plan outlining your services, target audience, and pricing model. Leverage technology to create innovative solutions, such as AI-driven recruitment or online training platforms. Focus on building credibility through content marketing, partnerships, and client testimonials. Continuous learning and adapting to industry trends will be key to long-term success.

Leveraging LinkedIn & Other Platforms for an HR Career

Example: How LinkedIn Helped a Professional Transition into HR

Let's take the case of **Josh Bersin**, a globally recognized HR thought leader and founder of Bersin by Deloitte. Although he started in product management and business operations, he used platforms like LinkedIn to establish his HR expertise, connect with industry leaders, and share insights on HR trends. Today, he is one of the most influential voices in HR and talent management.

How LinkedIn & Other Platforms Can Help You in HR

1 LinkedIn – The #1 Professional Networking Platform

- **Connect with HR Leaders:** Follow and engage with HR professionals, industry influencers, and CHROs. Commenting on their posts and participating in discussions can increase your visibility.
- **Join HR-Specific Groups:** Groups like *HR Professionals Worldwide*, *SHRM Network*, and *Talent Acquisition Innovators* provide valuable discussions and job opportunities.
- **Showcase Thought Leadership:** Share insights on HR topics (e.g., workplace culture, DEI, AI in HR) by writing posts or articles. Recruiters and hiring managers notice active contributors.
- **LinkedIn Learning Courses:** Courses on topics like HR analytics, recruitment strategies, and employee engagement can boost your skills and add credibility to your profile.
- **Job Search & Applications:** Companies post HR roles directly on LinkedIn, and you can apply while leveraging mutual connections for referrals.

2 X (Formerly Twitter) – Real-Time HR Trends & Thought Leadership

- Follow HR leaders like **Josh Bersin (@Josh_Bersin)**, **Laszlo Bock (@LaszloBock2718)**, and **Dave Ulrich (@dave_ulrich)** for insights.
- Participate in trending HR discussions using hashtags like **#FutureOfWork**, **#HRTech**, and **#PeopleAnalytics**.
- Engage in **Twitter Spaces & HR Webinars** for live discussions on workforce trends.

3 Glassdoor & Indeed – Employer Insights & HR Role Research

- Analyze **HR job descriptions** to understand required skills and trends in hiring.
- Read employee reviews to learn about company culture and HR practices at top firms.
- Look at salary benchmarks for different HR roles before negotiating offers.

4 SHRM, CIPD, & HRCI Platforms – Certifications & Professional Development

- Earn recognized HR certifications like **SHRM-CP**, **PHR**, and **CIPD Level 5**, boosting employability.
- Access **HR industry reports** and best practices from top HR associations.
- Join **HR mentorship programs** for career guidance.

5 Coursera, Udemy, & EdX – Online HR Courses

- Learn HR analytics, strategic HRM, and talent acquisition from top universities (e.g., **Wharton, Yale, London Business School**).
- Gain certificates that enhance your LinkedIn profile and resume.

- Shreya & Jashodhara