



Creating an HR Structure to Achieve Bottom Line Results

I recently attended a *great* HR meeting presented by the San Diego HR Forum.

(www.sdhhrforum.com) As the title suggests the goal was to understand how HR can help grow the bottom line.

The panelists included:

Julie Fletcher, SVP, AMN Healthcare
Chris Carroll, VP, HR, Callaway Golf Company
Alisa Judge, VP, HR, Sequenom
Marc Shapiro, VP, HR, Kratos Defense

It was moderated by one of the sharpest people I have ever met, Claudia Schwartz, from HR Results. Here are some of the notes I took at that wonderful session. Note there may be some overlap in the question/answer area:

What made you successful as an HR executive?

- The ability to get along with someone is more important than particular skillsets.
- Educating and selling the HR value.
- Ask how you can help the CEO or managers to be successful.
- A ton of passion and energy.
- Think of other managers as your clients.
- Be prepared to make hard decisions.
- Understand why people make the decisions they do.
- Hire to fill the gap in your own skills and abilities.
- Be highly adaptable.
- Celebrate your HR wins!
- Understand internal and external metrics.
- Provide support and mentoring to help employees conquer that “one thing” that gets in the way of their career success.

What makes for great HR?

- If you’re not generating the change, they will be doing the change to you.
- Importance of establishing credibility your first 3-4 weeks on the job.
- Stay out of the office at first.
- Understand that HR is very much a risk management role.
- Know the business.
- “Ask what’s closest to the dollars.”
- Recruit the best—understand the needs, competitor vulnerability, and appropriate compensation.
- Have business acumen, strategic thinking, influence, and candor.
- Stay away from being the HR police.

Staffing

- Make sure any HR executives you hire are results-oriented, flexible, and adaptable.
- Look for commitment, drive, energy, and passion.
- Know where you own gaps are. Often it's a lack of business acumen, which will be boosted by getting an MBA.
- Engage in effective listening, fluent speaking, and curiosity about the work you do and world you live in.
- Be very responsive. Try to get back to everyone within 24 hours.
- One of the greatest challenges is managing the first-time supervisor (we did a webinar on that which is available on HR That Works).
- What benchmarks, metrics, surveys, conversations, scorecards, can you generate?
- Are you attending the right meetings?
- Look to see what talent, infrastructure, and resources are available to you.
- "Listen to what your organization is asking for."
- "Where is the pain in the organization?"
- "Make sure your strength is in the field." In other words, don't get stuck in a corporate headquarter and be disconnected from field operations. If you have a large HR organization, make sure you have HR people reporting to field presidents to create buy-in.

How do you involve all of your business partners

- HR has a sales job to do. Try to make it their idea.
- Agreement is not buy-in.
- Tie in a new idea to an existing successful idea.
- Find out if the manager or supervisor is a trailblazer versus a traditionalist.
- Have a high tolerance for ambiguity.
- Focus on your blocking and tackling before you focus on strategic thinking.
- Keep communicating, keep communicating, keep communicating, keep communicating.
- Most CEOs don't know HR well, they just want you to get it right.

Last notes:

- Adopt HR as a business partner concept.
- Does HR find out about things after-the-fact or beforehand?
- Think of HR support as a call center. Allow employees to contact you by phone or email and make sure there is responsiveness.
- "What are the people implications of the key initiatives going around the organization?"

While the above notes may seem a bit disjointed, the overall theme of the presentation was not. If I could summarize it in three bullet points it would be:

1. The HR opportunity is what you make of it.
2. Strategic thinking is great, but blocking and tackling comes first.
3. You have to communicate the HR opportunity as most owners and managers don't fully appreciate it. HR has to be an influencer and has a sales job to do.

The meeting was highly satisfying for me not just because of my excitement about the San Diego Human Resource Forum having access to HR That Works, but because everything that was discussed in that meeting is embedded into the HR That Works program! I encourage you to watch the stored webinars and view the materials for becoming a strategic HR executive.