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# What is Human Resources | HR

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Human resources is used to describe both the people who work for a company or organization and the department responsible for managing resources related to employees. The term *human resources* was first coined in the 1960s when the value of labor relations began to garner attention and when notions such as motivation, organizational behavior, and selection assessments began to take shape.

Human resource management is a contemporary, umbrella term used to describe the management and development of employees in an organization. Also called personnel or talent management (although these terms are a bit antiquated), human resource management involves overseeing all things related to managing an organization's human capital.

Human resource management is therefore focused on a number of major areas, including:

- Recruiting and staffing
- Compensation and benefits
- Training and learning
- Labor and employee relations
- Organization development

Due to the many areas of human resource management, it is typical for professionals in this field to possess specific expertise in one or more areas. Just a few of the related career titles for HR professionals include:

- Training development specialist
- HR manager
- Benefits specialist
- Human resource generalist
- Employment services manager
- Compensation and job analysis specialist
- Training and development manager
- Recruiter
- Benefits counselor
- Personnel analyst

## **A Closer Look at Human Resource Management**

Human resource management involves developing and administering programs that are designed to increase the effectiveness of an organization or business. It includes the entire spectrum of creating, managing, and cultivating the employer-employee relationship.

For most organizations, agencies, and businesses, the human resources department is responsible for:

- Managing job recruitment, selection, and promotion
- Developing and overseeing employee benefits and wellness

programs

- Developing, promoting, and enforcing personnel policies
- Promoting employee career development and job training
- Providing orientation programs for new hires
- Providing guidance regarding disciplinary actions
- Serving as a primary contact for work-site injuries or accidents

Human resource management is about:

***Addressing current employee concerns:*** Unlike company managers who oversee the day-to-day work of employees, HR departments deal with employee concerns such as benefits, pay, employee investments, pension plans, and training. Their work may also include settling conflicts between employees or between employees and their managers.

***Acquiring new employees:*** The human resource management team recruits potential employees, oversees the hiring process (background checks, drug testing, etc.), and provides new employee orientation.

***Managing the employee separation process:*** The HR management team must complete a specific set of tasks if an employee quits, is fired, or is laid off. Paperwork must be completed to ensure that the process was completed legally. Severance pay may be offered or negotiated, benefits must be settled, and access to company resources must be severed via the collection of keys, badges, computers, or sensitive materials from the employee.

***Improving morale:*** Effective HR teams encourage company employees to do their best, which contributes to the overall success

of the company. Their work often involves rewarding employees for good performance and creating a positive work environment.

## **The Changing Shape of Human Resource Management**

Human resource management involves both strategic and comprehensive approaches to managing people, as well as workplace culture and environment.

The role of human resources professionals is to ensure that a company's most important asset—its human capital—is being nurtured and supported through the creation and management of programs, policies, and procedures, and by fostering a positive work environment through effective employee-employer relations.

The concept behind human resource management is that employees who are subject to effective human resource management are able to more effectively and productively contribute to a company's overall direction, thereby ensuring that company goals and objectives are accomplished.

Today's human resource management team is responsible for much more than traditional personnel or administrative tasks. Instead, members of a human resource management team are more focused on adding value to the strategic utilization of employees and ensuring that employee programs are impacting the business in positive and measurable ways.

An August 2014 *Forbes* article explored the shifting goal of today's human resource management teams. More specifically, the article found that HR teams focused on things that don't add true value to the organization are often deemed reactive, uncreative, and lacking

basic business understanding. On the other hand, HR professionals who want to be recognized as true business partners must see themselves as business people who specialize in HR, not as HR people who advise a business.

Today's human resources managers/business partners must understand the workings of the business and be able to comfortably speak the language of business leaders in order to have a measured and proven impact on business objectives.

## **The Agenda of Today's Human Resource Management Team**

Today's HR management team must focus their efforts on five, critical areas, according to the *Forbes* article:

***Define and align organizational purpose:*** A company's employees must be able to clearly articulate why the company exists in order to achieve a purpose-driven, sustainable, high-performing organization. Employees must also understand how their efforts connect, or align, with the organization's purpose.

***Recruit the best talent by creating, marketing, and selling an Employee Value Proposition (EVP):*** False marketing and misconceptions about an organization are some of the main reasons why the employer-employee relationship fails. Therefore, companies must create, market, and sell an EVP that is true and accurate as to not mislead potential employees.

***Focus on employee strengths:*** Companies must make every effort to understand what candidates and employees do best and put them into roles where they can play to their strengths as much as possible.

**Create organizational alignment:** Achievements must align with the organization's objectives so as to build a successful and sustainable organization.

**Accurately measure the same things:** All internal departments and employees must be measuring the same things as to achieve a definitive organizational result and to ensure that everyone knows exactly where the organization is at all times.

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