

HOW TO BECOME

A GREAT HR LEADER



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Introduction

HR is about so much more than payroll and processes. Automation and HR tech can take care of that now—leaving HR leaders the time and energy to deal with more advanced needs, like employee experience and developing retention strategies.

In this evolving world, HR leaders have a chance to show their value by partnering with leadership, making their mark on an organization. In this guide, we cover the four key ways HR leaders need to develop their skills in order to truly shine as an HR Director, Chief People Officer, or HR Lead.



The challenge: adapting to the HR leadership skillset

The HR function was, until recently, a mostly administrative role, focused on managing payroll and compliance. In recent years, however, the function has shifted dramatically, and the role of HR leaders has evolved with it. To excel as an HR leader, you need to master a new set of skills.

In an [interview with Hibob](#), Josh Bersin identified the four attributes that separate HR people from HR leaders: mastering the basics, embracing data, staying agile and innovative, and understanding business strategy. Read on to learn how to develop these skills.



1. Master the basics

According to Folkman Zenger's [five-year global study](#) of 360° feedback on HR leaders, one of the attributes other members of the organization highly value in HR leaders is their knowledge of labor laws, hiring practices, benefits, compensation, anti-discrimination policy, medical and family leave, and occupational health and safety.

To brush up on or improve your knowledge of HR fundamentals, you can use these three methods:

1. Subscribe

Trade publications perform a range of functions for the engaged HR manager. Global publications and websites like [Harvard Business Review](#) and [Bersin by Deloitte](#) offer critical insight into trends and developments, offering the latest thinking and research. This is a great way to stay connected to studies and academic theory as it applies to the modern workplace. In addition, respected publications like this can bolster your proposals for new strategic directions to C-level stakeholders.

Top HR leaders also keep informed of trends and policy changes at a regional level with more locally relevant publications, that will help you stay up to date with local labor laws and community changes.

Industry-specific publications will help you plan recruitment, engagement, and retention strategies that are a fit for your demographic.

2. Attend events (virtual and in-person)

Connecting with colleagues in different organizations is another excellent way to stay abreast of the important basics. You're probably already promoting peer-to-peer learning opportunities within your organization, so doing the same with your counterparts in other organizations can be a key way to keep your finger on the pulse.

You'll learn about tactics and strategies, get help solving knotty problems, receive recommendations for vendors and products, and focus on new and emerging areas of thought. Keep an eye out for location networking groups or companies offering opportunities, and make the most of them whenever you can.

Look out for:

- After work networking evenings
- Panels
- Round tables
- Conferences
- Webinars

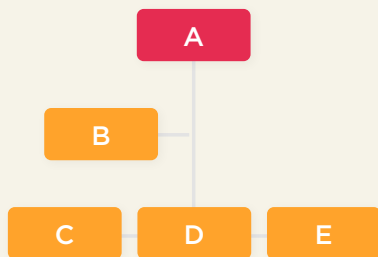
3. Upskill with courses and seminars

Continuous learning is a hallmark of great HR leaders, so look out for degrees, short courses, diplomas, lectures, and online learning opportunities to help fill in any gaps in your (and your team's) knowledge. For example, employment law, tech skills, occupational health and safety, and organizational psychology are all important pieces of the HR puzzle.

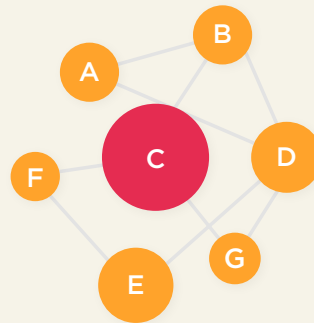
2. Embrace data

In today's unpredictable workplace, lean operations are essential to surviving and thriving. Organizations, however, are more complex than ever before, and we need to develop agile responses to changes: silos being broken down, and work modes shifting from traditional full-time permanent employees to contractors, remote, and outsourced workers.

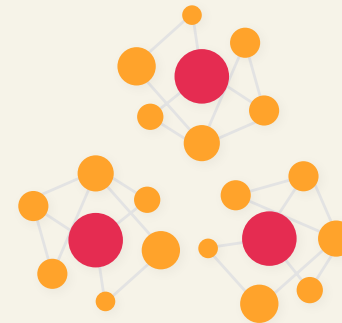
A network of teams



How things were



How things are



How things work

In this environment, knowing how to analyze and interpret data is the only way to make meaningful change and achieve success. Many have noted that [HR and IT](#) are growing closer as a result of the increasing need for technology and people processes to be integrated into organizations in order to collect and analyze data that drive strategic business decisions and improve overall performance.

With a strong foundation in digital tools and capture mechanisms, here are just some of the ways data and HR tech can be used to:

Automate and improve hiring and onboarding

Reducing [time-to-hire](#) is a key metric for HR professionals. Understanding where the bottlenecks are in your hiring process will help you make smart changes and improve your recruitment process.

Measure productivity at individual, team, and organizational levels

Setting up clear project goals and targets, as well as measuring them, means that you can collect data on everything from speed, effectiveness, cost, profit, and many other metrics to a granular level. This can help inform business strategy and people management decisions.

Predict and prevent employee churn at an individual level

With enough data, it's possible to predict in advance when an employee is at risk of leaving their role. Metrics allow you to act ahead of time to either re-engage or start preparing to replace them, to ensuring a smooth transition without a productivity lull and while awaiting a new employee to begin.

Three ways to get data literate

Understand the benefits of data

As a way to feel motivated to embrace the use of technology and data in your organization, it's worth spending some time reading case studies and reports on just how powerful big data can be to areas like engagement and retention, productivity, and performance.

This may also mean learning from others. For example, accessing the expertise of a consultant or a data scientist to connect the theory to the practicalities of your organization.

Use the right tools

Selecting the right tools and resources you need to transform the way your organization collects and analyzes data is an important task. The wrong choice could be expensive, time-consuming, and detrimental to morale and engagement.

The price of using the wrong tool can be great in cost, productivity, and engagement, so it's essential that you undertake significant research in the selection of these tools by requesting demos, seeking a range of tenders, asking the sales associates as many questions as possible, and trialing the product before buying.

You should look for a data tool that encompasses the whole employee experience that:

- Covers the fundamentals like payroll, benefits, leave, and attendance
- Includes performance metrics and workflow reporting
- Extends to engagement, health and wellbeing, and culture
- Has excellent customer service and training resources to ensure smooth onboarding and operations

Upskill your people

Finally, you'll have to be the biggest advocate for data in order to gain buy-in and traction in your organization. This means leading by example when it comes to any tools selected for data capture and analysis.

You'll also need to create opportunities for your people to learn how to use any tools you introduce, designing training sessions, or bringing in experts.



3. Be innovative and strategic

Great HR leaders must have a sense of **design thinking** and innovation, able to quickly adapt to new circumstances and shape organizational culture.

An example of innovation thinking for HR is applying design thinking. Design thinking applies tools from the world of design to human behavior; the idea is to avoid both risky decisions based on instinct and decisions based on past indicators which may not have bearing on the future. There are three main pillars of design thinking:

- 1. Empathy:** understanding the needs and problems of those you're designing for.
- 2. Ideation:** generating a lot of ideas to solve the problems you've identified.
- 3. Experimentation:** testing those ideas by prototyping.

Three ways to innovate

1. Understand other industries

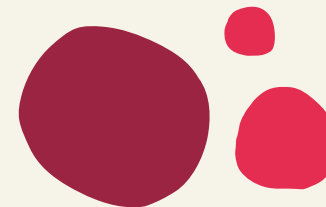
Immerse yourself in examples of great HR practices from other organizations in different fields. Approach your employees as customers and apply best practices from sales, marketing, and design to engage and retain them.

2. Collaborate with other departments

As proven in [this study](#) and many others, diversity is a silver bullet for solving problems and for coming up with innovative solutions. And, to use a more colloquial form of wisdom, “two heads are better than one.” To brainstorm ways to solve the people issues faced by your organization in the ideation phase, gather people from all areas and levels of the company.

3. Put culture first

Performance, engagement, retention, goal attainment: all of these challenges are influenced by culture in the organization. But culture doesn't just happen. Culture is created and demonstrated by leaders, and as the people leader, the burden lies with you to define and bring to life a culture that keeps employees engaged, healthy, connected, satisfied, and performing their best.



4. Understand business strategy

One of the ways HR professionals can thrive in the new work paradigm is to step away from the old model of HR-as-administrator. It's time to instead embrace a vision of HR that sees the HRD as the source of knowledge regarding the most critical resource available in the business: its people. To earn a seat at the strategy table, HR leaders must also understand how people resources affect the business as a whole.



How to get to know your business

Get to know your teams

As an HR leader, you should make the effort to get to know the rest of the business by spending time embedded within other teams and encouraging cross-functional cooperation and communication. This first-hand understanding will ensure that you get a holistic view of the company, not only in terms of the tasks and projects going on but also the people.

Familiarize yourself with industry movements

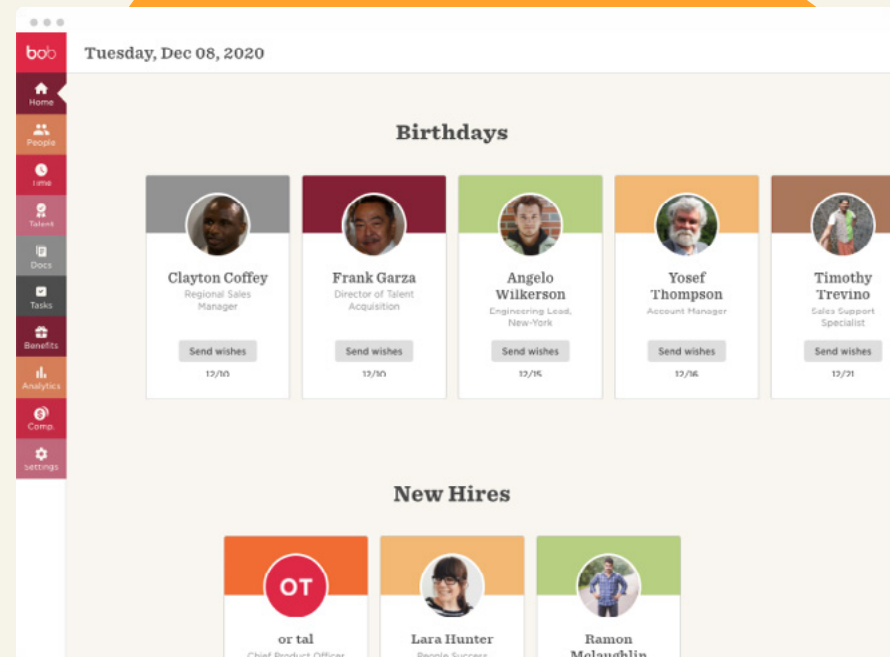
Keeping on top of news and trends is a fundamental way to stay connected with your organization's mission, strategy, and focus. Thorough knowledge of market movements will help you be prepared and proactive when these fluctuations inevitably affect your organization.

Prove your ability to be a business partner

It's not enough to collect data; HR leaders need to know how to analyze and interpret it for the benefit of other leaders in the business. For example, if data reveals that a team is failing, it's the HR leader's responsibility as the people expert to understand why and solve the problem. Similarly, hiring strategy, products and services, and company culture can all be influenced by an HR leader who is an expert on the statistics, trends, tools and resources necessary to increase productivity and performance.

Conclusion

With HR having undergone such a significant change in recent years, HR leaders may struggle to embrace their new roles. Today's HR leaders must be fully engaged in the present, investing their efforts in creating culture, engaging employees and optimizing performance, as these are the ways to ensure future success.



Meet bob

We know how important it is to make holistic, data-driven decisions about your people, especially in light of today's modern workplace changes. That's why we built bob, an employee experience platform that develops great people leaders and keeps them up to speed with the current HR space and the latest tech, while boosting the admin process, talent management, and culture.

The main functions bob uses to evolve and inspire its people leaders can be found in the Onboarding and Workflows features, with Integrations that empower and inform HR integrations.

bob grows great people leaders

Onboarding

Innovate experience that makes a lasting impression.

- Easy intros with Shoutouts and Superpowers
- Personalized training and tasks
- Harmonious team collaboration

Workflows

Adapt to tools that embrace data-driven strategy.

- Automate admin tasks
- Track customized data
- Streamline paperwork

Integrations

Stay up-to-date on tech that connects businesses.

- Web apps with G Suite
- Recruiting on Greenhouse and Comeet
- Messaging via Slack

In 2021, it's time to make smarter decisions
when it comes to your people and organization.

To learn more about hibob and our data-driven
tools, get in touch with us at

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