



Quick Guide: Taking Your HR Career to the Next Level



ClearCompany



Introduction

Human Resources is often tasked with caring for the careers of others. From career pathing and succession planning to performance plans and review cycles, your day-to-day is comprised of making sure your teams are on the right track. As a result, career planning within HR – especially at a smaller organization – is often difficult or non-existent.

You probably understand how rewarding working in HR can be, but that doesn't mean you've reached the ceiling of your own career development. If you're looking for ways to advance even further, this resource is meant to get you started.

Let's begin!

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Step 1

Translate Your Strengths

You're ambitious. You see problems and want to offer solutions. You care about people and their success. You can make tough decisions, because you have the foresight to understand the resulting implications. You know how to mediate by being sensitive to needs and showing stern guidance.

These characteristics are important to being a successful HR professional. However, in order to choose the right next step for your HR career, it's important you explore your unique strengths and how they relate to your journey.

Zeroing in on Your Next Step

Consider what motivates you most in your career. Maybe you enjoy developing processes and organizing information and would like to take a more strategic role within the operations. Maybe you really like connecting with the aspirations of others and have a knack for assessing untapped talent, so specializing in talent acquisition sounds inspiring. Maybe you truly like the complexities of compliance and making sure employees are receiving the best treatment. If you can't seem to decide what it is that pushes you, think about a specific part of your day that you enjoy the most.

Don't be afraid to discuss how others view your perceived strengths to gain even more insight. Speak with your manager in goal-focused performance reviews or even with a coworker in a more personal setting. They might be able to steer you in the right direction using their experience or knowledge of what your current company needs.



Step 2

Find the Right Path

You know better than anyone that the key to finding success in an HR career is experience. Those who move up the chain to management or director levels do not do so by simply earning degrees or certifications. It comes down to working in the field. However, even with many years of experience, it's important to do independent studying, too.

Some Conferences to Consider Attending...

- SHRM National Conference *(or your local state conference)*
- HR Technology Conference & Expo
- Social Recruiting Strategies Conference
- LinkedIn Talent Connect
- HR Tech World *(now stateside!)*
- ClearCompany's Talent Success Conference



Ways to Begin Advancing Your HR Career

Attend a Conference: There are so many amazing HR conferences, and you probably know some of the big names, but have you actually attended one? Because there are conferences in every state and region that cover just about every specialty, they can be great places to explore your HR and recruiting interests. Search some of your regional opportunities and delve into conferences that focus on specific areas influencing HR today (*technology, benefits, compliance, diversity and inclusion, etc.*).

The sessions will be great for getting inspiration or learning trends, walking the expo floor will introduce you to the newest **tools HR pros can use** every day and the social mixers will get you making industry connections. Not to mention, you'll leave with ideas to implement within your company to see better engagement and satisfaction.

If you aren't sure where to start, **lanyrd.com** will help you get started with some conference research.

Find a Mentor: It doesn't matter where you are in your career, you will benefit from the right mentor. Mentors can be colleagues who happen to work in a position that interests you or they can be senior level managers who know how to move up the ladder. Choose an individual who will take an interest in your goals and has the expertise to give you advice. Sometimes that is a friend, colleague, coworker or manager. Don't be afraid to reach out to thought leaders who inspire you. They might be just as excited to find a mentee or happy to connect you with a network of mentors. If there's no one in your network who could be a suitable mentor, check out **themuse.com** to get connected to a career coach and receive helpful advice from their blog.



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What propelled my HR career? Showing up. Showing up to volunteer, showing up to networking events, showing up to educational opportunities. This pattern of visible participation took my HR career to the next level.

When I fully showed up to HR events and participated with a sense of passion and purpose, people took notice. This participation opened doors for opportunities to write, to speak and ultimately paved the way to incredible job opportunities that were career changing. And if one of the people who notices happens to be your future boss, you've just completed the best "live interview assessment" ever.



Dawn Burke
HR Speaker & Writer,
Former VP of People

Attend a Webcast/Webinar: Sites like [HR.com](#) hold multiple webcasts each day that tackle real issues and trends in the world of HR. These webinars will help you get a deeper understanding of specific things happening in the industry while introducing you to other professionals who share your passion for your career. You can find topics that pertain to your company's needs or your own interests as an HR professional. You can learn outside of HR too. Remember, leadership and management skills are great for HR professionals to brush up on, especially if your goal is to step up to manager or director level positions. Sign up for their email lists to get notifications about webinars that may interest you. Even if you know you cannot attend a specific webinar that would be helpful, register anyway and listen to the recording!

Read Blogs and Follow Leaders: Today's HR and recruiting professionals are far more open to the world of blogging and social media. You can follow Twitter hashtags like #HRBlogs, #HR, #SmartHR, even if you don't have a Twitter account. You will be introduced to some great thought leaders who write and share HR and recruiting related media daily. Tools like [TweetDeck](#) will let you set up a continuous search for those topics so that you don't always have to go looking.

Some Blogs to Consider Following:

Fistful of Talent - Packed with snark and real hard-hitting industry topics, FOT features articles and commentary from a lineup of all-star HR and recruiting practitioners.

HRBartender - Sharlyn Lauby, HR pro and consultant, uses her blog to encourage friendly conversations around real workplace issues.

The Tim Sackett Project - HR/Recruiting pro Tim Sackett discusses everything from new HR technology to current events affecting today's worker and employer.

China Gorman - China Gorman helps demystify HR data to help readers grasp what's actually happening in HR and recruiting.

Pathfinder - Dawn Rasmussen, CMP, shares career advice gleaned from her years working as a career document writer and job search coach.

Surviving Leadership - Leading is hard. Mary Faulkner uses her 10+ years of experience advising organizations to remind leaders they aren't alone while guiding them to more effective management.

The HR Capitalist - With over a decade in the space, Kris Dunn helps HR pros get more strategic by looking at where HR, tech and business results intersect today.

Robin Schooling - Robin Schooling has a diverse background, serving many HR boards, associations and company functions. Her blog is focused on all the ways HR can grow.

Dawn.H.Burke - HR Speaker & Writer, Former VP of People, Dawn H. Burke uses current events and her own interest to discuss how to navigate HR in the real world.

ClearCompany - We cover everything talent management, including how candidates and HR leaders can develop their own successes.

Step 3

Get Tactical & Take Your Career to the Next Level

As an established HR professional, you are in an exciting time of your career. You have experience in at least one specialty, if not multiple, and can put some of your passions into your daily job. Even better, the HR field is quickly gaining more avenues to channel your outside interests. For example, employer branding and revitalizing the candidate experience has fast become a priority for many organizations thanks to the current candidate-driven market. Additionally, new trends in HR technology are requiring quick adoption to remain competitive in this fast-paced hiring landscape.

There are many avenues for career growth, and depending on your own personal and professional goals, the following tactics can be great next steps to propel your career.



Push your knowledge further by...

Getting Certified: HR professionals can prove their dedication, expertise and understanding of HR practices and fundamentals by obtaining credentials through the [HR Certification Institute \(HRCI\)](#) or [SHRM](#). The exams are difficult and require yearly devotion to maintaining the credential, but it does boost your resume and credibility and even salary. Already certified? Join us at the [Talent Success Conference](#) to learn HR best practices and receive recertification credits.

Considering a New Role: You don't have to dislike your current role in order to look for a new opportunity. Consider specializing in a specific area if you've spent your career working as a generalist, or vice versa if you have always worked as a specialist. Discuss the potential to take on a new project within your current company, such as starting a new CSR movement or culture building event. Taking on a new role might introduce you to a passion you never knew you had.

Updating Your Resume: Giving your resume some attention can serve two great purposes. One, you will be prepared should a new job opportunity arise. Two, you have a clear window into previous projects and successes which show your experience and talent strengths. With that, you can begin pursuing specialties or branching out.



Share your expertise by...

Writing: Do you have enough insight to fill a book? Then start working on the chapters! Maybe you prefer small quips with hard hitting facts and advice. Then a blog might be perfect for you. If blogging regularly sounds overwhelming, consider writing a few pieces when you get the chance then publish them to your LinkedIn profile or offer them to your favorite blogs for placement. Websites like [Recruiter.com](#), [ERE](#) and [TalentCulture](#) are well-trafficked and allow practitioners to submit articles for placement. Once you have a post in mind or written, apply to become a contributor and get published.

Teaching a Class/Becoming a Speaker: Ask to lead a lecture at a college or throw your hat into the ring to present a session at a conference. If you're interested in influencing local talent, consider contacting the director of human resources or management at a nearby college or university. They can help you connect with professors who can get you in front of studying professionals. You might find that you learn just as much as you teach. If you like discussing innovative ideas and aren't afraid of crowds of colleagues, consider applying to speak at some of the conferences you have attended or want to attend. State conferences can be great leaping points since associations tend to want local talent, but don't be afraid to push the envelope. Though they tend to want proof of performance, nationally recognized conferences are looking for rising stars, too.



"Your gift makes room for you."

An ancient proverb but timely for today. Share your knowledge with others. You will garner appreciation and promotion from your peers. Giving is the prerequisite.



Jo Weech
CPO, Anthem Engineering



Becoming a Consultant: Many organizations are in need of HR expertise, but can't create their own department. As a consultant, you can help provide a service to an organization you truly care about all while doing what you love.

Growing Your Social Following: Twitter, LinkedIn and Facebook have all become great tools for connecting with HR folks. The best part is you start to join the greater community of professionals, helping you find more opportunities to grow and expand your career.

Don't know how to start growing your networks or who to follow? Start participating in these Twitter chats:

*SHRM's #NextChat
#WorkTrends
#OMCchat
G&A Partner's #HRTailgate
#EBChat*



Become a leader by...

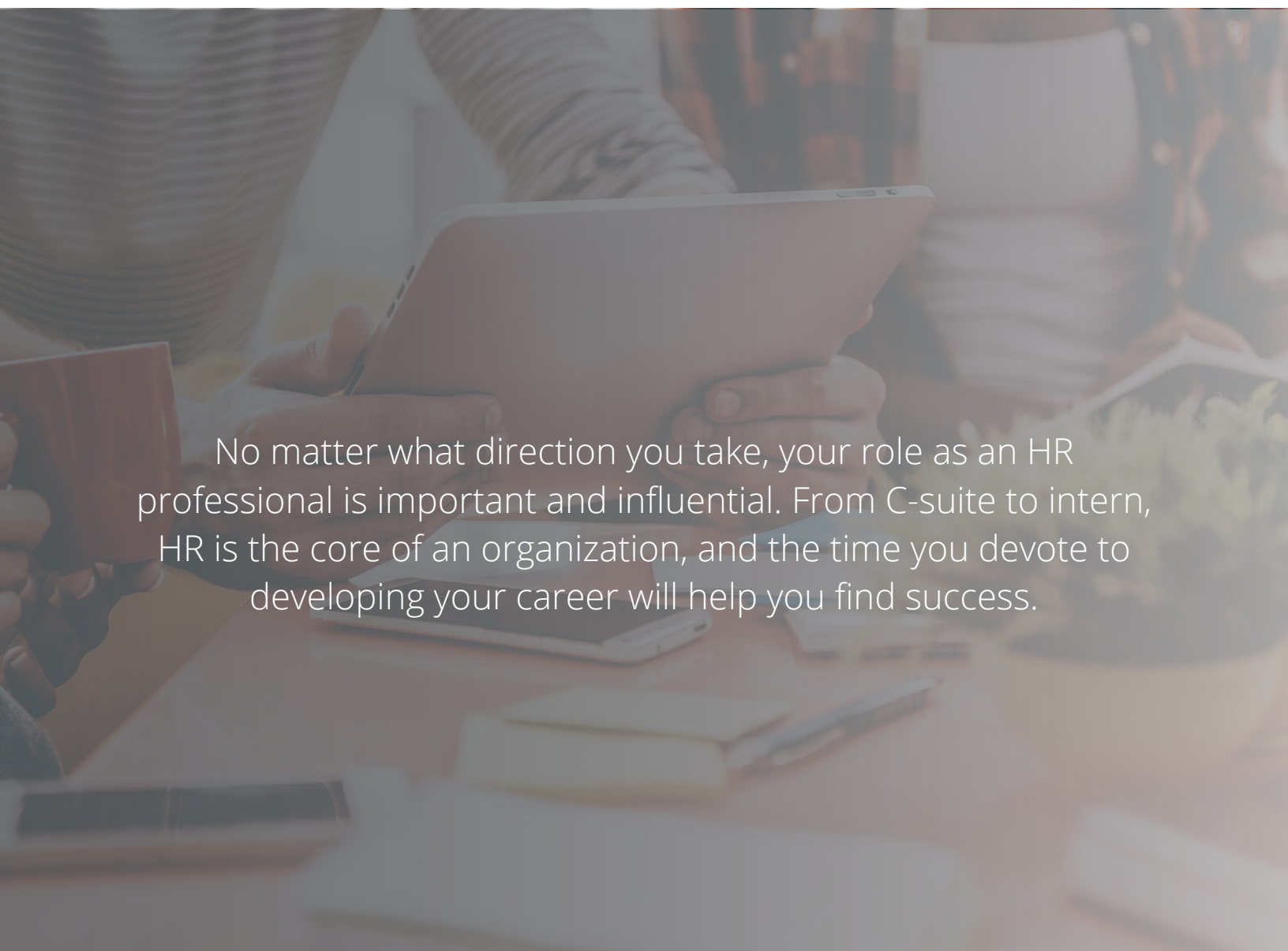
Taking Initiative: Is there a process in your organization that doesn't run as smoothly as it should? Take the time to consider the root of the issue and instead of presenting the problem to leaders, discuss the problem with potential solutions. Build pro/con lists, and research technologies if needed. Resources like Talent Success University can help you with a solution-driven approach to revamping a process or strategy at your organization.

Going Back to School: HR is heavily reliant on experience, but if you don't have a degree, you might find it difficult to break into a leadership role. If you've been trying to grab that director title, but just can't seem to get the offer, a degree might give your resume the push it needs.

Depending where you left off in your education, there are associate, bachelors and masters degree programs available for HR management, and many that can be obtained online. Completing an undergraduate program for HR management or a related business field is required to pursue a graduate program, but a GRE or GMAT **isn't required** (*however it may be helpful in applying*).

Becoming a Coach/Mentor: Mentoring/Coaching someone can help strengthen your leadership skills while also helping a fellow coworker or HR pro advance their career. Be open to someone who isn't in HR, too. Though you might not have all the answers on their particular role, you will gain the experience in goal alignment/development and leadership that can help in hiring and recruiting for your organization. Plus, you understand the intricacies of career growth within the organization. You can get started with your alumni organization, they typically sponsor mentorship programs and would probably be thrilled to match you with a student or recent grad.

Joining a Local HR Chapter (and becoming an officer!): There are a number of HR organizations focused on developing the careers of people just like you. If you aren't part of one, join! If you are, consider running for an officer's position to get a more hands-on role to boost your professional career and resume.



No matter what direction you take, your role as an HR professional is important and influential. From C-suite to intern, HR is the core of an organization, and the time you devote to developing your career will help you find success.