

## SEEKING 'PEOPLE' PEOPLE: A LOOK AT CAREERS IN HR

*Summary: Thinking about working in human resources? Learn more about these kinds of careers in this article.*



**Question:** Where can I find comprehensive information on the field of human resources? Can you share some specifics on HR and an overview of various components? Also, thoughts on integrating HR strategy into organizational strategy (in a different country) would be helpful.

**Answer:** Human resources, formerly referred to as "personnel," includes everything to do with managing the workforce: the people, the key assets of an organization. In other words, it covers a lot of territory! Significant workplace challenges (corporate mergers, a shrinking labor pool, global economics and pressure to do more with less) have added to the complexity of the role of human resources. The role of the HR department has expanded to a much more strategic position, often working closely with top executives to establish and influence policy that impacts the bottom line and demonstrates a return on investment.

Some of the major functions and initiatives of human resources include compensation and benefits, learning (training) and performance management, industrial and labor relations, recruitment and retention, diversity and career development. According to Robert W. Eichinger, Michael M. Lombardo and Dave Ulrich in "100 Things You Need to Know: Best People Practices for Managers and HR" (Lominger Ltd.), the five current top HR competencies are strategic contribution (culture management, strategic decision making, fast change, infrastructure design), personal credibility (effective relationships, get results, personal communication), HR delivery (development, HR measurement, staffing, performance management), business knowledge (value chain, value proposition, labor), and HR technology.

Professional associations, such as the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM), the American Society for Training and Development (ASTD) and the Organization Development Network offer top-notch resources, some available to non-members. Depending on your level of involvement, colleges offer single courses, as well as undergraduate and graduate degree programs, in human-resources management. Policies and practices do vary from country to country, so along with global best practices, it will be important to benchmark with leading companies in your specific country.

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