











development, HR departments not only make themselves invaluable, but they improve corporate culture and drive performance. They go beyond objective performance metrics. These measurements may not have anything to do with a company's success. Instead, HR departments can achieve qualitative results. This is especially important in large, cutting-edge companies that compete for a very small pool of talented workers, like Google, Pixar, Procter & Gamble, etc. These companies are "truly bringing human resources into the realm of business strategy" (Hammonds 46). However, most modern companies fail badly at moving HR standards beyond quantifiable metrics and into qualitative success. In the example that Hammonds gives of Libby Sartain, the chief people officer at Yahoo, this point is illustrated. In 2005 Hammonds praised Sartain as a creative HR "maverick" who "helped build the table" to take Yahoo to the top of the high-tech heap (46). She was praised as one of the highest-profile human resource leaders in the United States. But Sartain left Yahoo after seven years under a cloud. She was unable to initiate any meaningful change in the company's culture, and the only measure she gave of her success is that she "shepherd[ed] the firm's rapid growth in personnel, from some 3,000 employees when she arrived to 14, 300" (Workforce.com). This is exactly the kind of 'activity over deliverables' that Hammonds criticized in his article. Yes, the company expanded. Yes, it added more staff, and more layers of bureaucracy and impersonal internal policies. But what did the HR department at Yahoo actually accomplish, even under someone as talented as Sartain? Nothing qualitative. And now Yahoo is a company on the brink of collapse.

So, as Hammonds' article reaches its 10-year anniversary, what changes can be made in the HR industry to reverse this backward trend? Hammonds has a few answers. He says that HR staff should be recruited not because they "want to work with people," but because they have a high degree of business acumen and a background in strategic planning (46). Hammonds warns

that the “best and brightest” do not go into HR, so clearly the education and training process for Human Resource Management programs needs to change. To encourage more successful and qualified people to go into HR, schools need to rebuild the image of the division. One element that Hammonds did not mention in his article is how gender affects HRM. It is seen as a “woman’s division” within a company, and is therefore less likely to be a path to promotion to C-level executive status (Johnason 35). HR reps are also poorly paid in relation to the rest of the company (Collings and Wood 46), and they are often in charge of “planning company picnics” rather than playing any meaningful role in strategic planning (Hammonds 44). Female staff are often relegated to social planning committees and this is certainly not unique to Human Resource departments, but it does perhaps indicate why HR is seen as a corporate dumping ground and not a pathway to success (Hammonds 42). Business schools can address this gender issue by encouraging more men to go into the profession, which in turn has positive benefits for female employees by raising wages and improving chances for promotion (Vani 133). By raising the profile of HR and improving education in business skills, as well as employee growth and development, this issue of HR people having the wrong background could be solved.

Another issue Hammonds brings up is HR needs to change its measurement metrics to reflect value, not efficiency. He suggests that there should be a stronger link between employee measurement to business performance. This could be achieved by getting employees more invested in their working lives, and involving them in forming the strategic vision of a company. More involvement (facilitated by HR) could help give employees the necessary push to add more value to a company, and not just in terms of production (Hammonds 43). By addressing the day-to-day working conditions of employees, by helping to facilitate communication up the company ladder, and by making each employee feel valued and respected, HR will help link employee

performance to value added to a company. Although this is harder to measure, and require more planning and time, measuring performance value over production can give real insight into what employees contribute. This in turn makes HR indispensable rather than an expendable department whose tasks can easily be outsourced.

Another thing HR departments can change is to cancel the image that HR only “protects [the company] against their own employees” (Hammonds 44). This is an image problem for HR departments everywhere. While HR is seen as a resource, a point of contact if there is conflict between employees, HR is also viewed as a protector of the corporation, not of individual workers. So if there is workplace harassment, for example, HR will make the decision that benefits the company, not the worker. This perception must change, and the change starts with HR. It needs to throw out the focus on “standardization and uniformity” and learn how to make exceptions to the rules, to make employees feel like people instead of pieces of machinery (44). In fact, the solution to most of the problems Hammonds points out in his article could be solved with connection. Connections between the workers and HR staff, between HR and the corporate entity, between human capital and strategic planning.

In conclusion, very little has actually changed in the HR industry since Keith Hammond’s inflammatory 2005 article “Why We Hate HR.” Departments still focus on scientific management and objective measurement of employee performance. HR staff are not being recruited for their people skills, not business skills. And there is still a pronounced disconnect between strategic development and human resources. Until these problems are addressed through innovation and education, through cultural changes in the workplace and a new emphasis on value over product, the Human Resources field will continue to struggle against its own inevitable obsolescence.



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