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The role of contemporary CHROs continues to evolve as rapidly as the organizations they serve. *Strategic partner. Culture leader. Counsel to the CEO. Analytics visionary. Chief engagement officer.* CHROs today must be more than functional experts. They must be able to generate business value. And to bring the highest value to the company, they must partner closely with their CEOs.

CHROs need to embody the following three practices to have the most productive relationships with their CEOs.

### 1. Be a practical strategist

The most effective partnerships between CEOs and HR leaders happen when they align on a common vision and business strategy—and when the CHRO participates in both development



and implementation. Indeed, the CHRO can play a crucial role in scaling the company's strategy and promoting it with employees, and such efforts do not go unnoticed by CEOs.

In addition, as a partner on the vision, you are in a critical position to offer a practical perspective that can balance the often-aspirational CEO. Indeed, while visionary leadership is a hallmark of many a successful CEO, you are likely more in tune with the reality on the ground when it comes to the company's current resources and capabilities—and you can use this knowledge to help the CEO see how to realistically achieve his or her vision by saying, “Yes, but in this way.”

## **2. Have a perspective—and share it**

A common challenge among CEOs is the relatively limited group of people to whom they can turn for unbiased opinions. As the CHRO, you should be one of those people—but to do that, you must have an opinion to share as well as the confidence to share it and challenge the CEO's thinking. This means being unbiased but not neutral, even on matters that may not be your direct purview. Delivered tactfully, such proactive openness can create opportunities for you to be a valued adviser to the CEO on a wide variety of topics.

## **3. Offer an aerial view of the business**

As the CHRO, you need a strong understanding of what affects business performance and the bottom line. To this end, we have found that the CHROs who create the most successful partnerships—and careers—have worked in different parts of the business, from legal to operations to finance, and use this experience to provide valued insight. This knowledge can be critical to understanding the implications of major business decisions on core people strategies.

Regardless of your specific experience, you are in a prime position to advise your CEO on the impact certain decisions will have on employees throughout the organization. You can use your knowledge to engage with the CEO on not only where the business is now but also where it should be in one or multiple business cycles.

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