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Secrets to Being A Strategic CHRO | Aparna Sharma | Senior HR Professional & Certified Corporate Director | Editor's Collection

A Chief Human Resource Officer (CHRO) is arguably one of the most important and influential positions a company can have nowadays. In 2015, a global survey noted that 80% of executives say their company cannot succeed without an assertive, data-driven CHRO.

It wasn't always that way. Years ago, HR was all about a company's "payroll," but HR has now evolved into a function that focuses on recruiting and maintaining talent as well as business strategy. In order to keep up with the growing importance of the CHRO role, here are five traits that make for a great CHRO.



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1. Valuing employees' happiness –

A great CHRO needs to value employee happiness, health, compliance and evolution. Understanding that employees are the foundation of the company and that if you want to have the “best and the brightest” working for you, keeping them happy is crucial. If the CHRO has this rule of thumb in mind, they're off to a great start.

2. Ability to leverage data –

Analytics are a huge part of modern HR departments and as a CHRO knows, analytics can make or break how a company operates. When looking at people-related data, CHROs can gain better insight as to who to hire, who to promote, and what salaries to pay. “People analytics” can include demographics, age, personality, intelligence, and experience. This type of data can often tell a CHRO why top employees quit and how to build compensation and work environments to incentivize people to stay.

3. Being a People Person –

It might go without saying, but if you're a CHRO, you have to love being around people. Not only that, but you must possess people skills in order to relate to your employees and earn their trust. You'll likely be the go-to person that people at all levels of the organization trust with their feedback.

CHROs are often responsible for keeping up relationships outside of the organization as well. Attracting, recruiting and then retaining talent is an extremely important role. The most effective HR leaders are the ones who have the ability to build relationships throughout the company, as well as throughout the industry.

4. Knowledge of what other companies are doing –

Part of a CHRO's job is to identify the latest and greatest in all things HR, and being aware of what other companies, including your competitors, are doing is a must. What are their incentives like? Are they creating new job positions? Are they experiencing high turnovers?

Competitors' job postings can be a good indicator of how well that company is doing, or where they plan to focus next, which can be extremely helpful insight for a CEO. For example, if your competitor starts hiring

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for more technical positions, you can probably expect that they're stepping up their tech game, and maybe you should too.

The CHRO can also use the info gleaned from competitors to make a comparison with their own teams. Are the caliber of people in your company's positions comparable to the caliber of people in your competitors' positions? If not, some re-evaluation of company roles might be necessary.

Keeping track of other companies, even if they aren't in your industry, is crucial as well. Even though Google and Pepsi may not be direct competitors, for example, they can both learn from each other since both are innovative in leadership development and people operations.

5. Having the foresight to address issues and diagnose the problem –

Every company has business goals and it's upto the CHRO to make sure the right team is in place to meet those goals. Any gap between an employee's talents and their job requirements needs to be addressed, either with coaching or perhaps matching the employee with a different position. Having the ability to foresee when and if an issue might occur and then being able to come up with a solution is key.

The CHRO can also make recommendations on company structure, whether it be re-structuring company departments, or coming up with particular skills to look for when hiring new leaders.

Being a great CHRO requires having the skills to connect with all types of people, the ability to properly analyze the conditions of the workplace, and the foresight to predict and diagnose any problems.

The World-Class CHRO

Serving as the HR functional business leader is the foundation of the CHRO's role. CHROs also are expected to either come into an organization with, or quickly acquire, business acumen specific to the company they are serving, as well as to work with executive peers to shape and influence business strategy. These three areas of expertise are considered non-negotiable: they are essential for success in this—and any—C-Suite position.

The CHRO's role as the board's leader of human capital is one of the role's most interesting and important evolutions. The human capital aspect charges the CHRO with identifying external trends that impact the

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business and bringing them to the attention of the CEO and the board. In today's environment of rapid-fire information sharing, this role is key.

Culture is another area that requires us to be closely aligned. Leaders and employees need to be passionate about the company mission. To maintain that focus and passion as our industry and company continue to change and grow, we have to ensure that there is a clear connection between our mission and our words, deeds, actions and incentives, among other things. We need to make sure that our leaders are behaving in ways that

uphold the mission, and that we hold them accountable to deliver against that intent through performance and incentives. Operationalizing culture at scale is a daunting challenge and, while the CEO bears ultimate responsibility for this, the CHRO's role in connecting the dots for employees at all levels cannot be underestimated. We believe the driver of culture and purpose role is a critical one, and it is one where we are aligned and intently focused.

CHROs must actively look to the future. This will allow them to anticipate and react to trends in the global landscape and shifts in internal culture and strategy. Amidst these changes, CHROs will be able to develop and retain talent with an eye towards the future, make investment decisions in the workforce, and participate in long-range planning.

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