

HR Jargon - by Anne Howard

Several times over the last months human resource staff have commented about the need to be strategic business partners in their organizations. The words being spoken have had that trendy phrase sound about them. People are saying something they have heard others say, it sounds good and so they take the opportunities that arise to repeat it. Too often that "strategic business partners" phrase is followed by comments about Human Resource's exclusion from the decision-making events in the organization.

Personnel Management arose with the development of the Human Relations approach to management back in the middle part of the 20th century. In subscribing to the idea that by treating people nicely organizations would have greater productivity, the social convener and social worker personnel practitioner was born. Along with those roles the day-to-day administrative activities related to the hiring and managing of people comprised the Personnel Department responsibilities. As a result the personnel management role became a passive cost center in organizations. Personnel Management gradually became Human Resources Management with little change in the fundamental approach to the job.

There is a new nomenclature appearing for human resource management. As was the case with the change from Personnel to Human Resources, if a corresponding change in knowledge and thinking does not occur, it matters little if it is called Personnel, Human Resources or Human Capital. While the use of Human Capital may have some psychological impact leading to people being considered assets rather than liabilities, it does little to contribute to human resource management professionals being considered strategic business partners.

The challenges and changes of the late 20th century established a need for a human resource professional with both broader and deeper levels of knowledge. These new professionals understand all of the fundamentals of business management. They also have a solid understanding of people, knowledge of how organizational culture is created and how the structures, processes and values affect individual and organizational success. They are able to see the connection and interaction between those factors and their impact on achievement of the organization's business goals. They identify and implement changes that facilitate performance excellence in owners, managers and employees, which in turn results in achievement of organizational goals.

Whether the Human Resource Professionals of the future are called Human Resources or Human Capital or another title these professionals will only be seen as strategic leaders with a seat at the decision making table when they are proactively using their specialized knowledge to positively affect organizational results.

