



CAHRS Virtual
Working Group:
Building HR Capabilities
to Thrive in the new
World of Work
November 15, 2022

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In this working group, CAHRS Executive Director Beth Flynn-Ferry and ILR Senior Leader Programs Director Karen Siewert led a discussion about how CAHRS companies are evolving their HR functional learning and development strategy to thrive in the new world of work. Eleven CAHRS participants discussed several issues related to hybrid/remote work arrangements and return-to-work policies.

Summary of Participant areas of interest:

- Developing HR skills now and for the future
- HR Career Pathing- Engagement and Talent Mobility
- New nomenclature for HR Skill leveling
- Maximizing learning self-service tools

**DISCUSSION
TAKEAWAYS**

How are things changing post pandemic?

Post pandemic, employee needs and preferences for learning and development have changed across the organization. Virtual learning fatigue is driving the need for organizations to be more creative in how training is being delivered. In general, there is an increased demand for learning to be more engaging, personalized, and delivered in a cost-effective manner.

Targeting Human Resource Skill Building

As the Human Resources function has taken on a more central leadership role in managing the business, there is a growing need for HR training and development. However, learning and development for HR is often neglected. A lack of time and changing business priorities are making it difficult for HR to focus on their own learning and development needs. There is a movement away from traditional competency-based learning towards skill building for HR to support ready-now leaders to help the business navigate the challenges of a changing workplace. Key areas of targeted skill building discussed, included:

- **Business Acumen** – at the junior levels, the focus is on understanding the financials and key metrics of the business. At the senior levels, providing business leadership is more important.
- **Digital & Data Analytics** – understanding how digital is impacting the business is a key area of development for HR. With an increase in information, HR needs to know how to both interpret and tell the story using data.
- **Strategic Thinking** – to be effective, HR needs to think critically, logically, and strategically to help the business meet its current and future talent needs and develop a plan to address any gaps.



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- **Consulting/Business Partnering Skills** – given the rate of change and growing needs of the business, contracting and prioritizing work are a key area of development for HR. While development of consulting skills has traditionally been a requirement for HR Business Partners, there is a growing need for COEs to learn this skill as they lean in more to the business issues.
- **Wellness & Stress Reduction** – a couple of organizations mentioned that they have placed a priority on programming and tactics to address change fatigue and stress in the workplace. One organization has initiated ‘Focused Fridays,’ where no meetings are scheduled, in place of the summer half day Fridays.

Approaches to Support HR Learning & Development

Organizations mentioned that they are using several innovative approaches to help HR focus on their learning and development needs, including:

- **Dedicated time to learn and engage.** One organization mentioned that they are more intentional about bringing HR together in the office where they are co-located to create focus. These include ‘enablement sessions’ that force HR to step away from their workspace and reduce the risk of multi-tasking. Scheduling a meeting room for co-located HR to participate in HR townhalls was one example shared.
- **Choice-based learning.** There is a growing emphasis on providing individuals with the ability to make their own choices about what they need to learn in the moment that is most applicable to their job. A self-managed approach to learning is driven based on individual interests, needs, and availability of time to learn.
- **Digital skill-based learning platform.** One organization is using a digital learning platform to provide a personalized learning approach and support the move away from traditional competency development to focus on skill building. Participants’ proficiency against a series of skills is assessed and the results create a targeted learning and development plan which includes suggested targeted trainings available, recommended gig assignments, and mentors to connect with. The objective is to create a ‘Netflix’ experience that will eventually provide predictive analytics to offer individuals suggested career opportunities and a clear path for progression within HR.
- **Democratization of Learning.** Learning needs can cut across the organization and programs are being offered more broadly based on organizational skill building needs. For example, one organization is creating a digital HR academy where content is curated based on skill (e.g., project management, strategic workforce planning, etc.) and time available (e.g., 2 minutes to 1-hour segments). Another organization has begun offering traditional HR partnering learnings to all of HR in areas such as compensation, succession planning, leadership and development, diversity and inclusion, etc.

Ongoing Areas of Challenge: HR Career Pathing

- **More inclusive approach needed:** Internal HR talent mobility is a high priority. At the senior leader to VP level, there is generally a well-established process and support in place for career



progression, including leader assessments, availability of coaching, established pathing for development experiences, training identification, etc. However, this tends to be less defined and well supported for the rest of HR.

- **Broader Exposure to HR Career Pathways:** There is some resistance in organizations for career shifts between HR generalist/business partner roles and COEs. To counter this, one organization has adopted a career lattice framework which emphasizes the ability for HR career pathways to take different directions (vertical, horizontal, and diagonal movements) to gain a broad range of development experiences. Another organization is creating 'day in the life' profiles for some HR roles to create visibility and make them more tangible by describing the skills, needs, and value of the roles.
- **Learning Agility:** One organization is rotating its senior HR leadership team every six months to build learning agility and give the team a more holistic view of the entire business.

This Summary Report was prepared by Karen Siewert and Beth Flynn-Ferry for participants of the "Building HR Capabilities to Thrive in the New World" Virtual Working Group.

The Center for Advanced Human Resource Studies (CAHRS) is an international center serving corporate human resources leaders and their companies by providing critical tools for building and leading high performing HR organizations

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