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What skills and abilities does it *really take* to succeed as a Senior Human Resource Professional today?



Executive Summary Report
of a Survey of Senior HR Generalists

Prepared by:



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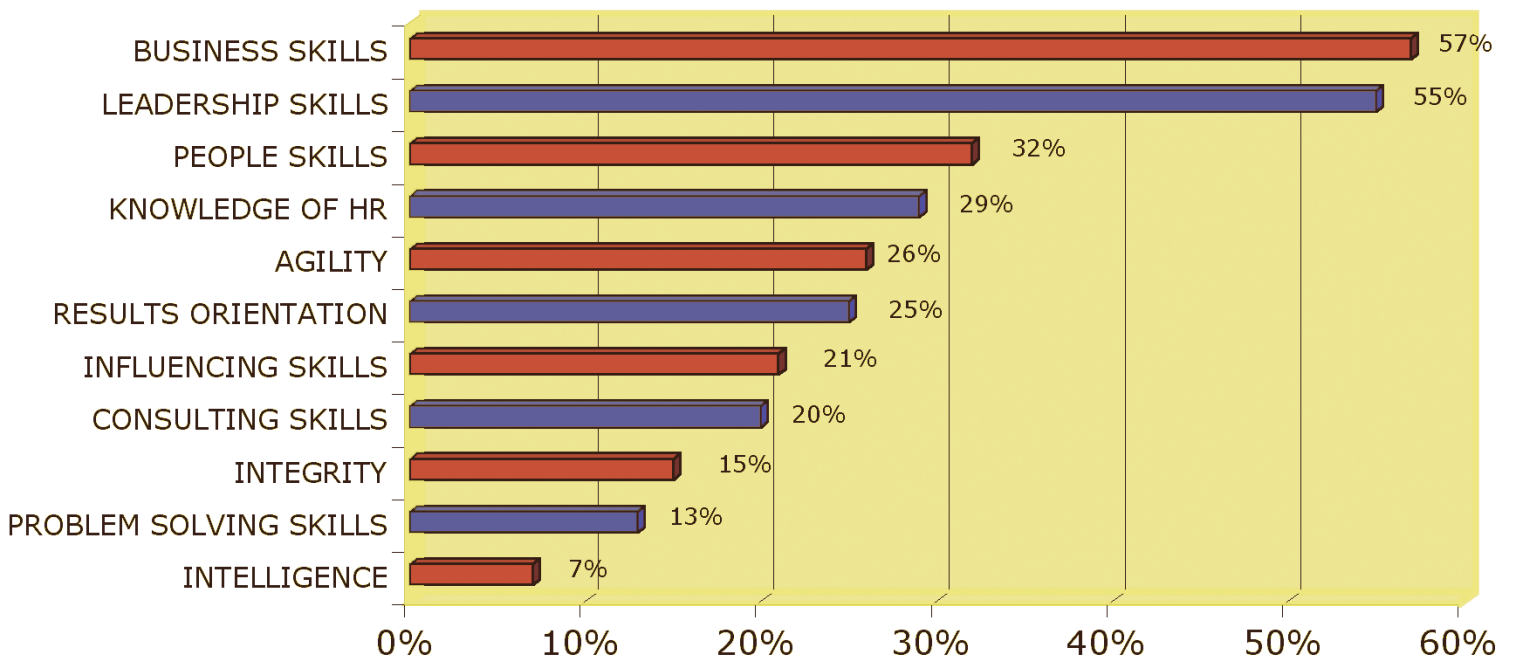
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About This Report

276 senior human resource professionals representing a wide variety of industry sectors responded to a web survey that asked the following question: ***You're currently in a senior HR generalist position and it's time to start thinking about your replacement. Please list the three skills, competencies, or characteristics that you would look for in your successor.*** The results were content analyzed and are presented in Table 1 below.

The Skills, Competencies, and Characteristics Needed by a Senior HR Generalist¹



¹ The percentages in this chart refer to the percentage of the senior HR professional survey respondents who identified this skill as one of the three most important for their eventual successor. Each of the categories are defined on pages 3-6.



Results Summary

- **Business skills and leadership skills were the most frequently mentioned skills needed for a senior HR generalist.** More than half of the respondents feel that these two skills are key to success in their position. Business acumen, knowledge of business concepts, and strategic thinking are viewed as critically important characteristics for a senior HR professional.
- **Knowledge of HR is important but not the most important characteristic needed by senior HR professionals.** Senior HR professionals cited business skills, leadership skills, and people skills as important qualities of their successor more often than they cited knowledge of human resource topics such as compensation, benefits, and staffing.
- **Agility is an important characteristic for senior HR professionals.** More than one-fourth believes that it is important for their successor to be flexible and able to manage rapid change.
- **It is vital to be able to get things done.** One-fourth believes that a senior HR professional must be results oriented. They must excel at managing and completing projects that add value to the organization.
- **Senior HR professionals must be able to influence others.** 20 percent said that it is important for their successor to have political savvy, be persuasive, and know to market and promote their agenda.
- **Consulting skills are a valuable asset.** Senior HR professionals must be able to act as a trusted advisor and coach to senior managers. They must also be able to maintain a strong internal customer focus and provide excellent customer service to their customers.



Definitions of the Categories

The skills, competencies, and characteristics that comprise each of the 11 categories shown in Table 1 are described below. Representative comments are also provided.

Business Skills

Business acumen, knowledge about the business, industry experience, the ability to serve as a true business partner, financial acumen, and the ability to manage costs

Business Acumen: Understanding of P&L Statements, Budgeting, Analytical Forecasting, and Business Operations.

An understanding of both the various functionalities (Marketing, R&D, IT etc.) and knowledge of the industry is important. HR professionals would be well served by a rotational assignment in a line role at some point in their career.

A curiosity and interest in the nature of the business – customers, new products, key levers of profitability and the ability to earn the respect of “line” colleagues as a contributor to business strategy.

Leadership Skills

Strategic focus, visionary, strong leadership and management skills, ability to delegate, good talent management, and the ability to work with and facilitate teams

My successor needs to be a strategic and visionary executive.

Demonstrated superior management skills

Be willing and able to make tough decisions and drive individuals to decisions.

People Skills

The ability to accurately assess people, develop strong relationships, good listening skills, emotional intelligence, strong oral and written communications skills, and the ability to coach and mentor staff

Communication skills (written, verbal, and presentation) are vital as well as the ability to listen and “read” people and audiences on all levels.

Relationship Building – the ability to build, nurture and maintain strong relationships throughout the organization as well as outside of the organization throughout the industry, business circles, as well as community.

Knowledge of Human Resources

Generalist with experience in all of the major aspects of human resource management including executive compensation, benefits, staffing, executive search, organizational design, HRIS, and global human resources

A strong grasp of Executive level HR issues including executive compensation, benefits, and associated accounting impacts.

Technical knowledge and competency in all areas of HR – you do not have to know every “nut and bolt” of compensation, benefits or staffing, but understanding of how these intertwining functions impact the overall company performance/productivity, is essential.

Agility

Flexibility and the ability to multi-task, manage change, remain thick skinned, and keep life in perspective

Strategic agility (i.e., able to see ahead clearly, future oriented, clear mission/vision/purpose)

Flexible and adaptable – must be able to adjust strategy and direction as business needs and resources change.

Results Orientation

The ability to get things done, the ability to add value, good program management skills, a proactive orientation, decisiveness, and persistence

It is important be motivated to drive for results.

Results oriented – talking theory sounds great, but at any senior level getting results is key.

Influencing Skills

Political savvy, persuasiveness, ability to market the HR function within the organization, and respect in the HR community

Senior HR generalists must understand the organization they support and be able to influence their senior leaders. Not only do they have to build effective relationships but also they need to understand their audience and present information in different ways to gain buy-in and affect outcomes.

Ability to influence at all levels, internally and externally: to be able to drive decisions at the board, executive, functional and local levels, including the use of resources, timing, and investment in strategic initiatives.

Consulting Skills

Ability to connect with senior managers, ability to serve as a trusted advisor, executive coaching skills, internal customer focus, customer service skills

The ability to establish credible relationships throughout the organization and influence decisions is important.

Excellent customer service skills are important. In this role it is critical that you follow through with what you say you are going to do and respond to customers (internal/external) in a timely manner.

Integrity

High ethical standards, high moral standards, and trustworthiness

Integrity: Principled approach to people and business decisions, eye to compliance, fair and honest dealings.

Integrity that comes across in actions as well as communications and builds trust and credibility is imperative.

Problem Solving Skills

Critical thinking ability, creative and innovative problem solving skills, good judgment, and the ability to resolve conflict and build consensus

Creative/innovative problem solving ability is critical.

Willingness and ability to listen constructively, and utilize information to resolve conflict proactively (i.e. before crisis point).

Intelligence

Common sense, strong analytical ability, comfort with quantification, and metric skills

Analytical – A candidate for my position must be able to use data to support the business case for decision making.

Intellectual horsepower

Practical intelligence



About Discovery Surveys

Discovery Surveys, Inc. provides strategic consulting based on high quality, customized research using web, paper, telephone, and focus group methods.

We have conducted surveys for more than 100 organizations including: Alcoa, BBN Technologies, Delta Dental Plan, Harvard Vanguard Medical Associates, Invensys, Johnson & Johnson, the Massachusetts Medical Society, the Mayo Clinic, Revlon, Sodexho, Textron Systems, Timberland, and W.R. Grace.

Employee Surveys – Understanding the views of employees is critically important. We conduct customized employee survey programs that provide an objective understanding of the views of employees about communication, management, supervision, pay, benefits, career development, training, and quality. Our normative database of employee attitudes helps our clients gain a better understanding of the views of their employees.

Customer Satisfaction – Satisfied customers are the most important assets of any organization. Our customized customer satisfaction survey programs help our clients improve customer satisfaction, retain valuable customers, improve the quality of their products and services, identify what is most important to their customers, assess how well their staff is serving customers, and understand the differences between the views of their A, B, and C customers.

To discuss how we can help you better understand and improve the views of your employees and customers, contact:



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About Gatti & Associates

Founded in 1985, Gatti & Associates is a mid-sized executive search firm specializing exclusively in the search and placement of Human Resources professionals.

Our mission is to help organizations meet key business challenges through the recruitment of exceptional HR talent. Over the past 18 years we have filled over three thousand positions in industries such as financial services, technology, retail, biotechnology, consumer products, manufacturing, health care, education, and consulting services.

Our deep knowledge of both the HR discipline and the HR community, coupled with our understanding of the requirements of corporate environments, results in successful searches that are executed in a timely and cost efficient manner.



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