



## Hr Role – A New Panorama

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**ABSTRACT**

*With the growth in the industries and the increase in the number of workers, who are much knowledgeable and skilled today than what they were before, the pressure on the HR department to cater to their aspirations on an ongoing basis also increases. To tackle this pressure, the transformation of HR role has become a need of an hour. Keeping this in view the study has found importance to know about the different roles to be played by the HR department in today's competitive world. The paper has attempted to throw a light on the conceptual aspects of four different roles of HR with the help of Ulrich's Model and also highlighted about its global challenges.*

**KEYWORDS : Ulrich Model, HR Role, Global Challenges, Competitive world**

**INTRODUCTION**

There are an incredible number of pressures on today's organization. It may be environmental pressures such as increasing globalization, rapid technological change, and tougher competition or Organizational changes such as new organizational alliances, new structures and hierarchies, new ways of assigning work, or may be Changes in the workforce, including employees' priorities, capabilities, and demographic characteristics. Within these pressured organization, there is a need for (and opportunity for) the HR function to play a critical role to navigate the organization through the transitions. In order to play this role, however, HR will have to increase its real and perceived value.

To describe about the different roles of HR, the study has taken David Ulrich's Model of HR Role under which new roles are mapped out for HR. Each role combines to focus on delivering improvement within the function and within the business.

The different roles (Ulrich Model, 1997) are:

- Strategic Partner
- Administrative Expert
- Change Agent
- Employee Champion

Through this model HR can tackle its challenges in a holistic way. HR is able to tackle the strategic issues by having a Strategic Partner who clearly focuses on them. Through an Administrative Expert, the function is able to demonstrate and is supporting the financial goals of the company by focusing on having an efficient and high quality service. The Change Agent role allows the function to meet the challenges of the changing business environment and positioning the business to execute strategy. Through demonstrating its control of internal efficiency and quality, the HR function can build the credibility to support its right to engage with the business in the other areas. Finally, the function is also able to focus on the employee relationship and improving employee capability, by the establishment of the Employee Champion role.

**LITERATURE SURVEY**

The review of literature has been focused in the area of four different roles of HR Department, which has mentioned above by taking into consideration both national and international studies.

**STRATEGIC PARTNER ROLE**

Ulrich's (1997) HRM model consists of four roles with associated deliverables. Strategic partner requires that HR managers align HR initiatives with strategic organizational goals. The deliverable for this role is an executed strategy that creates value as seen by major organizational stakeholders, investors, line managers and employees (Ulrich and Brockbank, 2005). In order to implement this role, HR managers

must own organizational and financial knowledge (Brockbank and Ulrich, 2003). In this way, HR managers will have a place at the leadership table with other organizational functions.

Many organizations choose mergers and acquisitions as a growth strategy, and human resource management plays a key role in ensuring strategic fit across borders (Aguilera and Dencker, 2004). HRM can contribute to organizational effectiveness by being involved in the merger and acquisition process where as Solomon (1998) argues that mergers often result in a loss of shareholder value, and one of the reasons for the disappointing track record of mergers is that the key HR executive is not brought into the integration process soon enough and also highlighted about the process by which the merger would proceed, and its effect on people. As human resource planning is a strategic activity, the current changing trend results in challenges with respect to the strategic partner role (Kostova and Roth, 2002).

(Svoboda and Schroder, 2001) has witnessed through their study that how the Deutsche Bank transformed its HR function into a strategic partner with the identification of a new HR competency model, the use of a balanced scorecard approach, a worldwide reorganization of the HR function, and a state of the art information system. Hence it is clear that as a strategic partner, HR managers can influence leadership to write policies and align activities with the organizational goals.

**CHANGE AGENT ROLE**

Change agent delivers a renewed organization that is more competitive. To achieve and maintain competitive advantage, organizations must adapt to inevitable changes in the competitive landscape, government regulations and global economy (Ulrich and Brockbank, 2003). HRM must implement practices that help managers monitor and react to significant changes in their business environment. HR managers must also help top executives to develop and communicate clear visions of the future, develop procedures that motivate and reward behavior consistent with goal achievement, and overcome employee resistance to change. (Deutsch, 2003) The HRM change agent role helps leadership renew organizations that effectively address changing marketplace demands. Globalization typically results in doing business across distinct cultures, languages and legal environments, making organizational renewal challenging. This in turn requires a strengthened HRM change agent role.

Organizational changes often occur over long periods, create considerable anxiety on the part of leadership and employees, and typically deploy change agents that lead the transition (Seo and Hill 2005, Nandler and Tushman 1980). Cross-cultural dimensions influence how HR managers add value as leaders and change agents. As several authors (Kotterman 2006, Zaleznik 1988 & Kotter 1990), argue that leaders create change in contrast to managers who maintain the status quo

cultural dimensions which heavily influences change agents. Change often takes years to achieve visible results however, organizations which possess HR who can play a role of change agent can definitely experience the visible results no matter what ever the changes takes place in the micro and macro environment.

**ADMINISTRATIVE EXPERT ROLE**

Administrative expert delivers efficient processes (e.g., recruitment, selection, training, compensation, benefits, work force planning, and performance management) that utilize new technologies and improved methods. A sound knowledge of the field of HRM, coupled with technical knowledge allows HR managers to identify opportunities that add value (Ulrich and Brockbank, 2003).

Increased efficiency due to the upgraded administrative HR role often results in faster delivery and lowers the cost which is also supported by Maidment (2004) who stated that globalization drives organizations to pursue new technology which in turn reduces the cost and increases the speed of HR services. On the other hand, Wright (2004) argues that web-based technologies minimize administrative expenses and achieve compensation objectives. Web-based technologies that automate compensation planning, administration, and employee communication can increase efficiency, reduce cost, and motivate employees. Administrative efficiency may involve a comprehensive human recourse information system (HRIS) that provides timely information to decision makers worldwide (Bohlander and Snell, 2007).

**EMPLOYEE CHAMPION ROLE**

Employee champion maximizes employee contribution and commitment in two ways. First, HR managers listen and respond to employee needs with available resources. Employee concerns vary from day to day issues (e.g., issues with coworkers and supervisors, motivation, discipline), long-term issues (e.g., career development), and legal compliance (e.g., alleged discrimination). HR managers spend about 19% of their time addressing such issues (Ulrich and Brockbank 2003, Lawler 2003). Second, HRM practices increase employees' knowledge, skill and ability to contribute to organization effectiveness. Career planning, training and development, and mentoring are among the many programs that align employee competencies with business objectives, and therefore add value. The deliverable for the employee champion role is to maximize employees' contributions to the organization and advocate for employees rights. The advent of e-learning and distance learning enables organizations to develop employees on a global scale at low cost (Galloway, 2005).

Globalization of operations is likely to increase the number of expatriates and employees returning to their home countries (repatriation). HRM practices must improve given the high expatriate failure rate in terms of costs and retention upon return (DeCieri et. al., 2005). HRM practices must improve in order to address issues of dual career families, compensation, safety, and career continuance. HRM practices that may improve the expatriate success rate include pre-departure training and socialization (Babcock and Du-Babcock, 2001), and more effective selection of employees for foreign assignments (Harvey and Novicevic, 2001).

Expatriate safety has become a concern in many parts of the world (Schramm and Burke, 2004 & Tahmincioglu, 2001). Expatriates are increasingly concerned about their safety and many expatriates in high-risk areas request that their organization move their families to safer locations (Hanrehan and Bentivoglio, 2002). Immigration is currently a political and economic issue of concern to organizations that hire immigrants. Sensitivity to a diverse workforce across diverse parts of the world presents challenges with respect to the employee champion role. Employee champions maximize employee contributions and advocate for employees within the nation and also across the globe.

**HR ROLES AND THEIR GLOBAL CHALLENGES**

	Strategic Partner	Change Agent	Administrative Expert	Employee Champion
Deliverable	Align HR activities and results with company goals	Renew organization that is more competitive	Increase efficiency of HR services	Maximize employee contributions

Global Challenges	Assist management with international mergers and acquisitions.			Reengineer the value creation process to maximize efficiency.	Assess global training needs.
	Balance the need to transfer best practices from the home country with the need to adopt local practices.	Help management create an international organization vision, mission and objectives.		Manage offshoring process.	Establish a worldwide human resource, succession, and career development systems.
	Increase sophistication in international human resource planning.	Create a sense of urgency, need for change, and alignment among diverse populations.		Recruit and select employees globally in a timely and cost efficient fashion.	Increase sensitivity to cultural differences.
	Assist management build organizational capabilities on a worldwide basis.	Communicate effectively across cultures and languages.		Manage the high cost of expatriation.	Increase knowledge of local employment laws and practices.
	Create alignment across borders, cultures and languages.	Facilitate change that comprehends cultural differences and local customs.		Manage processes such as compensation and benefits internationally.	Ensure expatriate safety.
			Provide efficient training programs.	Meet global employee informational needs.	

**Sources:**

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**CONCLUDING REMARKS**

Though there is an urgent need for the HR people to upgrade themselves in their roles and play accordingly however, in practice they are unable to fulfill their roles up to the mark due to many hurdles. Literature survey witnessed that, HR being Strategic Partner can help organization to achieve its long term strategies in case of mergers and acquisitions however it is also associated with the problems of being part of Strategic formulation team due to lack of necessary and required set of skills and competencies.

Due to globalization and changing environment in the business, there is a need for the HR to play a role of change agent in order to gain competitive advantage. To be a change agent HR should transform and gain the knowledge of tackling different types of culture and working environment.

Being administrative expert, HR can deliver all its functions effectively and fasten the HR service which in turn increases the efficiency of the organizations. By playing the expert role HR can possess the best talented stock of human capital and can also forecast the future man power requirements. Most of the authors found that HR is playing more administrative expert role than the strategic role.

Increasing employee contribution and developing his interest towards the job is the utmost thing to be considered by any organization. To be in track with the employees needs and expectations and to fulfill it the HR has to play a role of Employee Champion. It is clear from literature survey that globalization will result in more employee issues and the burden on HR as a employee champion is increasing day by day.

However, being an effective HR professional does not mean simply moving from operational to strategic work. It means learning to master both operational and strategic processes and people. The op-

erational and transactional aspects of HR need to be handled well. A strategic partner has multiple dimensions, HR professionals as business partners operate in each of the four roles. HR professional, in order to meet the demands of these new roles, a shift in mindset and capability is a must.

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