

## Why choose a career in Human Resources?

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**Aparna Sharma, Country Head – HR, Lafarge India Pvt Ltd, shares why one should have a career in HR and much more...**

**By Aparna Sharma**

It is 17 years since I passed out from the Tata Institute of Social Sciences after specialising in HR. When I meet friends, they often smile and invariably ask the same question: “What do you do?” I say HR. “Oh, what does that involve?” I explain that it involves human capital management and help major companies select, retain, and develop their cadre of rising stars. Simply put: I work in Human Resources (HR).

A career in Human Resources is not the typical destination of an MBA. During graduation, when asked what I wanted to do, I would say MBA. Instantly the next question was, in what Finance or Marketing? It is assumed that MBA in HR is for those who want work-life balance – do not have the stomach for ‘real’ business. And, of course, a favorite line: “If they’re so interested in helping people, why don’t they just go into social work?”

The answer is simple: HR today sits smack-dab in the middle of the most compelling competitive battleground in business, where companies deploy and fight over that most valuable of resources—**Workforce Talent.**

There is a very famous slogan that is used in all companies “People are our greatest asset!” However, it is difficult to believe in it as only few HR professionals show true commitment to developing and leveraging those people’s abilities which has created a bad image of the HR fraternity. We are also aware of the stereotypes of HR professionals and of the reality that many HR activities, such as recruitment, training etc. are increasingly being outsourced. But the staggering cost of finding and hiring top talent today—not to mention the millions of dollars’ worth of productivity that can be left unrealised when a company’s employees aren’t engaged with their jobs—highlights the need to devote more time and resources to developing and managing the greatest asset- **its people!** HR professionals are known for making big statements using heavy jargon but only a few walk the talk.

Having said that, the Human Resources function has undergone a significant transformation. Long gone are the days when it was thought to play little more than an administrative function within a business. Today, HR is a strategic imperative for the success of any organisation. Worker’s mobility is increasing and lateral movement is becoming more attractive to some people than moving up. Baby boomers vacate their corner offices, decreasing the supply of experienced managers; and the millennial generation brings new expectations to the workplace. Low Cost and High WOW is what is expected from today’s HR professionals.

In recent years, Human Resources has seen a shift from managing the monetary levers of human resources—compensation, benefits, and other expenses—to increasing the asset value of human capital, as measured by intangibles such as employee engagement and employee development. A new kind of HR professional is emerging to manage this transformed function, someone who deeply understands not only talent-management processes but also an organisation’s strategy and business model—someone who is responsible for, say, hiring and training marketing managers but who also knows how to put together an effective marketing plan. Thus, HR professionals are now expected to know not only about their function but also about the business in detail and be true “business partners”.

Human Resources function involves study of human psychology and organisational psychology. This is important for us to understand to not just relate to the person in front of us but also to become humane!

We work in an organisation as a link between the workers and the management and hence we have to have lots of patience, empathy, perseverance, humility and at the same time have the tough heart to tackle any nonsense! The HR person should be worker oriented in front of the Management and Management oriented in front of a workman. He/She should do lots of listening by which one can solve 50% of the workers problems.

Some of the major reasons why people choose a career in HR are to assist in the development of employees, the opportunity to influence innumerable aspects of the organisation and to play a part in influencing strategic business decisions. A business is only as good as its employees, and an organisation's employees are only as good as their Human Resources team. Sounds like a motherhood statement, but so true!

The most important challenge about being in HR is the fact that output is not quantitative but it is qualitative and so it is difficult to quantify this output. Human Resource is the 'Center of Organizational Excellence' (COE) that will leave its footprints on the organisation's growth by influencing best human capital outcomes. This COE will thus not be one of the departments that are different from other departments but rather will be a 'CENTER' of an organisation's energy and vitality.

So if one is up for this challenge, then HR is the right path as this profession teaches you to think with your brain and heart.

***An HR Professional has to be an "Enabler" also a "Designer" and an "Educator"***

***The author is the Country Head – HR, Lafarge India Pvt Ltd***

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