

Why HR Connectors Succeed

BY ROBIN SCHOOLING, SPHR

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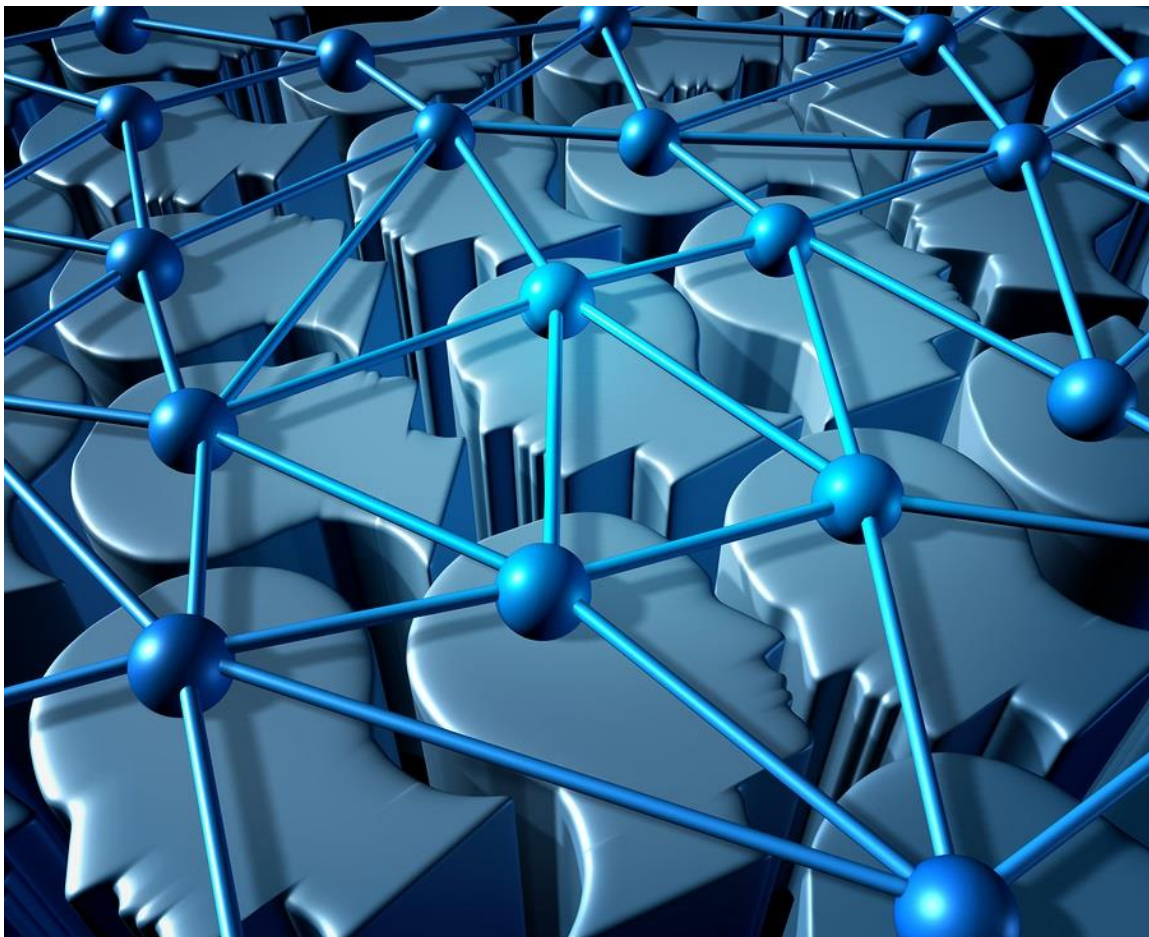
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Executive Summary

Whether participating as a strategic business partner or influencing organizational change, HR professionals play a vital role in developing, contributing and supporting their organization's mission, vision and values.

The importance of connecting, linking and championing collaboration between employees has increased in importance as HR professionals maintain a primary focus on attracting, acquiring and developing talent.

As organizations move from a pyramid structure to networked entities that minimize boundaries, HR professionals must be ever more attentive to fostering and encouraging connections.



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Professional Development

Professional connections are necessary for HR professionals' personal career success. To further that end, we join associations and networking groups with a focus on turning casual acquaintances into deeper and more purposeful contacts.

Sadly, however, we often neglect to make powerful connections with those who work *within* our organizations. This includes partners in marketing, IT, finance and sales. This

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includes members of the leadership team and the numerous and various regional vice presidents, directors and account executives who fill the ranks of our companies.

In order for HR professionals to deliver value on the talent agenda and operate effectively in any sort of strategic capacity, we need to have strong relationships built on trust, likability and reciprocity.

In “Leadership Conversations: Challenging High-Potential Managers

to Become Great Leaders” (Jossey-Bass, 2013), authors Alan Berson and Richard Stieglitz define four types of relationships critical for business success: targeted, tentative, transactional and trusted. The focus of these four relationships vary:

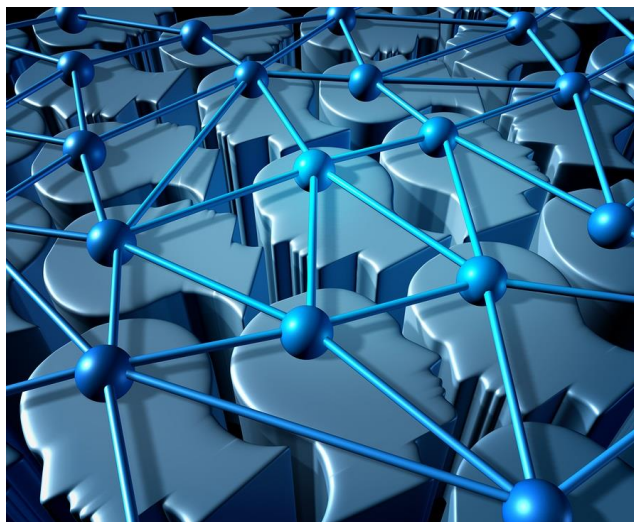
- **Targeted relationships** are with new acquaintances with whom you believe you will have mutual benefits. Establishing a targeted relationship is easy if you follow up with someone you’ve met at a conference or event or connect via LinkedIn or a similar networking site.
- **Tentative relationships** are with people you speak with or see regularly. These are the relationships you pursue when you purposefully get to know someone better. Tentative relationships often lead to sharing small favors or finding someone to assist with a project or initiative.
- **Transactional relationships** occur regularly; for example, the relationships between a manager and an employee or with a service provider or vendor are transactional. Due to the frequency of working together, trust and respect are critical.

- **Trusted relationships**, which can have a long-lasting impact, often exist between a mentor and mentee or among close peers. Senior members of a leadership team often develop trusted relationships with each other.

Relationships & Connections

Relationship building and connecting with others is a foundational business activity. HR professionals should first determine with whom they want to build relationships and then how to reach those people. The right approach to connecting with people is to realize that if you give, you will get.

HR professionals who endeavor to build relationships with internal partners in a transparent and high-trust environment are better equipped to uncover misalignment and hone in on organizational areas in need of tune-up.



Connecting with Employees

HR professionals need to connect employees to the mission, goals and strategies of the organization, drawing the line from what each employee does in his or her particular job to the company's overall objectives. In order to execute on organizational strategy,

employees require an understanding of company goals and which ones they contribute to or have an impact on.

“Employees should never view the HR department as the company equivalent of the department of motor vehicles.”

When we understand the types of relationships Berson and Stieglitz mention, we can map out our plans for making connections. The focus should be on connecting with people — not positions.

We need to be approachable. Ensure the physical environment of the HR department is open and welcoming, and a hub in the company to which people want to come, not a destination they dread. Employees should never view the HR department as the company equivalent of the department of motor vehicles.

Immersing ourselves in the business also means connecting with employees on a personal level. Mary Barra, CEO of General Motors (and former vice president of global human resources), is well known for going into the field to visit employees at all levels; she has meaningful and memorable conversations because she is authentic, personable and real.

Connecting with Managers

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Connecting with leaders and managers in the organization means focusing on the business optimization agenda — not on the HR agenda. When you know the business agenda, you’re able to give advice in the appropriate context.

As in successful relationships of any type, giving before you’re asked is imperative. Once you’ve established camaraderie, you can easily discern a manager’s needs, desires, concerns and wants.

Connections can lead to enhanced business success (collaboration, innovation and engagement). A variety of technology solutions make some of these things even easier. Whether you’re managing an employee referral program or seeking a powerful engagement tool to share and align resources across the enterprise, there are solutions to build upon this connection engine.

Every individual in an organization has a voice, a story and an opinion. By understanding how to build relationships and focusing on forging connections with employees and managers, HR professionals can have an impact on individuals, organizations and initiatives.

About Robin Schooling, SPHR

Robin Schooling, SPHR, has 25 years of senior HR Management experience in various industries including healthcare, gaming, manufacturing and banking.

In 2013, after serving as Vice President of Human Resources at a \$5 million organization, Schooling established Silver Zebras, LLC to assist organizations in developing integrated human resources and talent strategies. Schooling currently serves on the market advisory board of BlackbookHR and has served on the advisory boards for Smartbrief on Workforce, Geaux Veterans and the Louisiana Business Leadership Network.

In 2012, Greater Baton Rouge SHRM awarded Schooling its “HR Professional of the Year” award. Schooling has a popular HR blog at HRSchoolhouse.com, and contributes to the blog WomenofHR.

About HRCI

HR Certification Institute (HRCI) is the premier professional credentialing organization for the human resources profession. For nearly 40 years, HRCI has set the standard for HR mastery and excellence around the globe. An independent nonprofit organization, HRCI is dedicated to advancing the HR profession through developing and administering best-in-class certifications including the Professional in Human Resources (PHR®) and the Senior Professional in Human Resources (SPHR®). All of HRCI’s credentials are recognized as the most rigorous, meaningful, and grounded professional certifications demonstrating competency, real-world practical skills and knowledge in the field. Together with HRCI-certified professionals in 100 countries around the globe, HRCI ensures, strengthens and advances the strategic value and impact of HR.



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