

Becoming an HR Business Partner

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An [HR business partner](#) is "an experienced human resources professional who works directly with business units or an organization's senior leadership to develop and implement an HR plan that aligns with the organization's goals". The HR business partner is regarded as the strategic business partner that can give recommendations and make impactful decisions. The Human Resources Business Partner(HRBP) integrates the HR function with the business side of things to assist the organization in achieving its business objectives. This calls for all HR Business Partners to appreciate the overall business value proposition and design HR policies in such a way that they drive business growth and profitability.

According to [Gartner, they are four different roles of HRBPs that demonstrate their cross-functionality](#):

- **Strategic Partner:** Crafts and implements enterprise-wide strategies to chronic challenges.
- **Employee Mediator:** Creates sustained solutions to individual employee challenges.
- **Operations Manager:** Measures and monitors existing policies and procedures.
- **Emergency Responder:** Provides immediate fixes to acute emergencies.

It is a matter of regret that the HRBP is still being looked down upon and regarded by most C-executives as primarily an administrative role rather than a strategic business partner.

[Future-Ready HRBP Duties and Responsibilities](#)

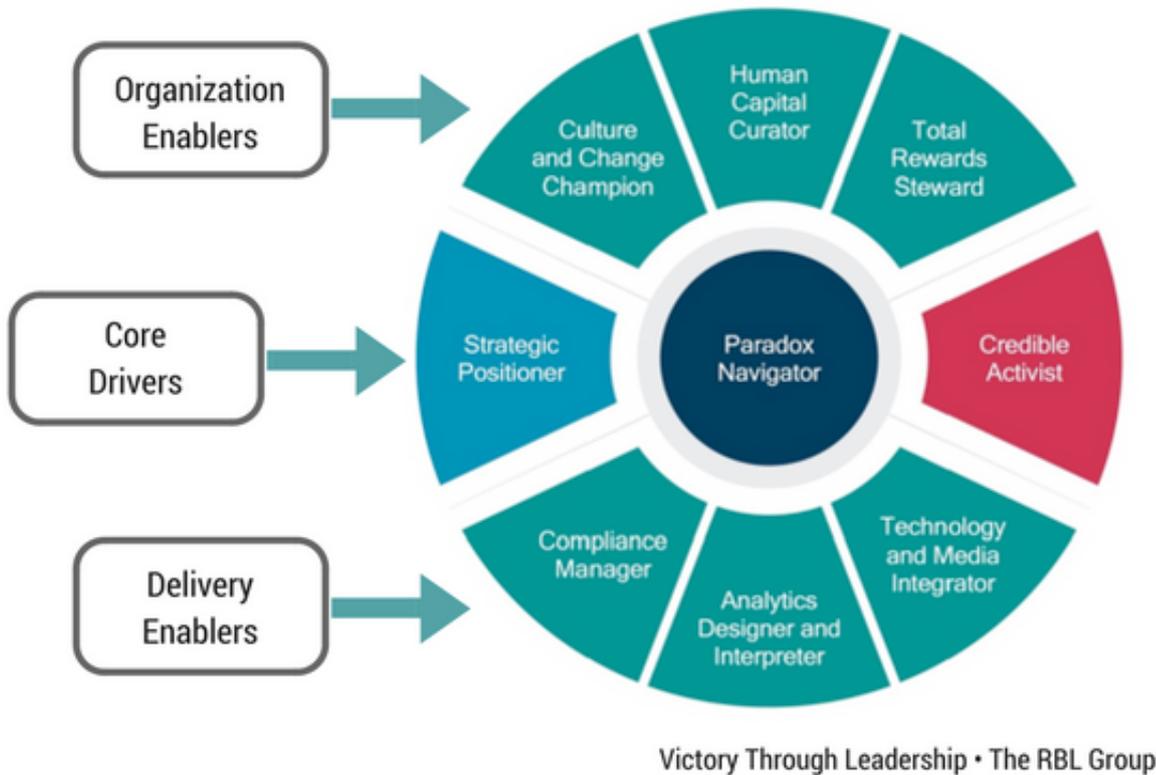
Below are some of the futuristic responsibilities of the HR Business Partner.



Source: AIHR: The Academy to innovate HR.

What are the competencies of the HRBP?

The HR competency model by *Dave Ulrich (2012)* proposes that HR Business Partners should master six competencies, and these competencies are based on research from more than 20,000 respondents (HR professionals and their line and HR associates) around the world, who completed assessments of HR competence (140 behavioral and knowledge items). These competencies are illustrated in the diagram below:



Source: Ulrich, D., Younger, J., Brockbank, W., & Ulrich, M. (2012). HR from the outside in: Six competencies for the future of human resources.

1. Strategic Positioner

It refers to the extent to which the HR Business Partner assesses both the external and internal business contexts and translates those evaluations into practical insights that help position the organization to be successful.

Sub-Competency Cluster	Description
Strategic Alignment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assess variances between current HR practices and those required to achieve the organisation's strategic plan Manage the HR practices work plan and ensure that the strategic goals of the organisation form the benchmark for success

2. Credible Activist

The credible activist means the extent to which the HR Business Partner achieves the trust and respect

they need to be viewed as valued and valuable partners.

3. Paradox Navigator

It is a supreme paradox that HR Business Partner sometimes seeks to maximize ideas and outcomes inherently in direct opposition to each other. It lies upon the HR Business Partner to constantly manage the paradoxes or tensions in work settings. Eg. manages the tensions between the need for change and stability.

4. Culture and Change Champion

The HR Business Partner needs to manage both change and culture. By championing change and culture, HR Business Partner consistently makes things happen. The sub-competencies are as illustrated below:

Sub-Competency Cluster	Description
Designs Organisational Culture	· crafts the right organisational culture to deliver organisational results
Manages organisational change	· innovates HR systems based on changing business demands.

5. Human Capital Curator

The HR Business Partner should offer integrated and innovative HR solutions for managing people within their organizations. The sub-competency clusters include among other clusters

Sub-Competency Cluster	Description
Develops Leaders	· develops succession plans for critical leadership positions · Assesses the capacity of leaders against established leadership competencies
Drives Performance	· Designs performance measurement systems that distinguish between high performers and poor performers.

5. Total Rewards Steward

The HRBP should design and implement a reward strategy that considers compensation and benefits

(financial rewards) and nonfinancial rewards.

Sub-Competency Cluster	Description
Manages Compensation and Benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The HRBP should always seek to balance monetary and non-monetary rewards for employees

6. Technology Integrator

The HR Business Partner should leverage technology and technological tools to enhance the HR value proposition.

Sub-Competency Cluster	Description
Integrates Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Applies technology to HR practices
Leverages Social Media Tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leverages social media platforms for business purposes

7. Analytics Designer and Interpreter

The HR Business Partner must be able to use analytics to impact decision-making. Analytics goes beyond collecting data and having scorecards to using data to improve business decisions.

Sub-Competency Cluster	Description
Gets the Right Data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Incorporates rigorous data analysis when interpreting information, i.e to make use of quantitative data to make insightful and impactful decisions
Interprets Business Data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses HR analytics to create value for the organization

Over and above the competencies briefly dissected above, the HRBP should have a solid appreciation of:

- stakeholder management
- **good communication and presentation skills.**
- **Effective at dealing with resistance**

What's the difference between an HR manager and an HR business partner?

They are fundamental differences and minor similarities between the Human Resources Manager and Human Resources Business Partner. [An HR manager typically](#) is in charge of the HR department, develops policies and standard operating procedures, recruits, and does general administration. On the other hand, the HR business partner is not in charge of the HR department but instead works as a coordinator between senior leadership and department managers to help communicate and guide the organizational strategy.

It is important to note that [an HR business partner and HR manager are separate roles](#) and represent different human resources services within an organization. The HR Manager does administrative work like processing payroll, recruitment and oversees the HR department, whereas the HR Business Partner does not do administrative work for the HR Department. Instead, the HRBP's role is to work closely with the executive leadership team and line managers in developing overall company strategy. Over and above that, the HRBP, in collaboration with the HR department, consults the executive team on HR issues and initiatives.

Unlike the HR Manager, the HRBP's role is directly related to current and future business needs. The HRBP is concerned less with administration and compliance issues and more about how a strategic plan for employee recruitment and retention can improve the effectiveness of a business unit. The HRBP is more of a strategic resource partner than an administrative support position on employee issues.

The difference between an HR Manager and an HR Business partner is that the HR Manager has managerial responsibilities. In contrast, the HR Business Partner does not have, and instead, the HRBP is solely an individual contributor, advisor, and consultant who should be data-driven. Also, unlike the HR Manager, the HRBP's role and responsibilities are increasingly evolving and becoming more strategic. The HRBP should not be preoccupied with administrative functions but strategic ones. A competent HR business partner must think strategically, do scenario planning for the future, and leverage technology to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of workflow.

In contrast to the HR Manager, HRBP determines the organization's human capital strategy rather than focusing on designing and implementing policies like the HR Manager. Unlike the HR Manager, the HR Business Partner ensures that HR strategy is aligned with the overall organisational strategy.

It must be noted that the HRBP is not the HR Manager but instead is more of a consultant who works in human resources creating business value through partnering with business leaders.

The above discussion makes it crystal clear that the HRBP unlike the HR Manager, should assume a strategic role and rely more on data than intuition when making decisions. It is also apparently clear that to be a competent HRBP, they need to master a host of critical competencies.

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