



STRATEGIC OPINION AND THOUGHT LEADERSHIP



Are HR professionals missing a trick?

Does HR have the right skills and competencies as it moves up into the boardroom.

In a pan European study undertaken by Mercer among over 300 HR Professionals across 25 countries it is revealed that 70 percent of organisations have or are planning to transform their HR functions. A big shift in the way businesses perceives HR seems to be the catalyst for this activity.

HR is now seen as being more clearly a key element of the strategic business mix, with engagement at board level that goes way beyond remuneration, focusing on leadership succession and development, workforce planning and organisational change. Sixty-two percent of HR directors now report to the CEO, a significantly increased figure since 2003.

However, the research indicates concern that HR has not prepared itself well for this shift into the boardroom. The skills needed to be an effective business partner at this level were found to be weak.

“Europe’s HR executives tend to agree that HR is exhibiting broader business and operational-management skills, but there’s still a very strong emphasis on HR’s traditional expertise, with its focus on recruitment, team and people skills,” Mr Vernon, principal for Mercer’s HR effectiveness business in Europe explained. “A greater integration between those skills and a wider business and operational command is essential for HR’s strategic future.”



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Whilst being strong in HR skills the need exists for professionals to grow their own personal skills and competencies beyond the traditional brief. The specific areas of need highlighted by this research include:

The ability to
improve
customer
services

The ability to
process and
manage
projects

The ability to
deploy
technology

Business and
financial
understanding

We can see from this survey that progress is clearly being made; yet the function still has a significant challenge in raising its own competencies and skills in new ways in order to interface with operational and strategic elements of the business.



It appears to be time for HR to turn the learning and development spotlight on themselves, undertaking some of the interventions that would normally be the reserve of their customers. If you aspire to influence the boardroom wearing your HR hat, then it may be time to broaden your own skill pool.

