

Best Practices White Paper



Insights to help move
the performance needle

Assess Needs

Grow Revenue

Satisfy Customers

Create Leaders

Manage People

Optimize Projects

Measure Results



The Exact Expertise to
Ignite and Sustain Performance™

Sitting at the Grown-Up Table? Becoming True HR Business Partners: The Keys to Success

What does it take to transform HR into true business partners?

Or in one of our client's words, "How can we get HR to move from the kid's table to the grown-up table?" Over the years we have been asked this same question numerous times. We decided to interview clients who were in the midst of this transformation to hear what they had to say. We heard from them all that "there is no magic bullet."

The transformation of HR into successful business partners is a continuous journey that can take years to complete. Not only does HR have to change how they work with other departments, but managers of all levels within the business must also change how they work with HR.

The clients we interviewed all started with the vision that Dave Ulrich provided in his book, *HR Champions*. In his famous four-box quadrant he states that HR needs to take a strategic focus to managing HR transformation and change, as well as an operational focus to include HR services and employee contribution.

Easy to say - putting this model into action is another story however.

This article provides some insights into best practices and key lessons from HR organizations that have embarked upon the quest to become true business partners.

Specifically, we found 5 distinct factors that increase the chances of making the transition successfully:

1. **Compelling motivation**
2. **Assessment done well**
3. **Streamlined operations in place**
4. **Strong leadership**
5. **Ongoing development**

"There
is no
magic
bullet."

GET MORE
SOLUTION
DETAILS



GO TO
LSA GLOBAL
WEBSITE



Compelling Motivation to Change

Each organization we interviewed had undergone a dramatic change in their company's business or culture that created a compelling motivation for their transformation.

Company changes, such as a merger, the economic downturn, a financial crisis, and increased competition pushed HR into launching the journey to transform itself. Simultaneously the door was opened for the business to accept the shift and the new role of HR.

Without a motivating factor, HR transformation can be tediously slow and adoption of the required new behaviors is difficult. However, with an external motivating factor, there is a sense of urgency and an openness to change. For example, at Wells Fargo Bank, the merger with Norwest created a cultural shift. Team members, management, and customers were treated differently at the two institutions. The adoption of the Norwest culture as an employee- and customer-focused company pushed Wells Fargo HR to assess themselves and to determine how they could add value to the business and contribute to the larger organization's key strategic goals.

#2 Objective and Accurate Upfront Assessment

Taking a good, hard look at the team, the individuals, and their skills and competencies is critical. Similarly, assessing attitudes, career goals, and abilities to work effectively as business partners is key to putting the right people in the right jobs.

From the top down, every organization we talked with confirmed the need for open and honest assessment. HR executives had upfront and frank conversations with the business leaders about the new organizational structure and the new role of HR. These conversations laid a solid foundation for the transformation.

For some HR professionals, these joint role-clarifying discussions allowed them to decide what they really wanted to do: some chose operational or centers of excellence roles versus the HR business partner roles; some selected other opportunities within the company; and some opted to leave the organization. Others recognized that this new HR business partner role was what they had always wished for. Through honest and direct assessment, people were put in roles in which they truly added value to the business in ways never done before. One HR consultant summed it up by saying, "I feel that I am finally eating at the big table with the adults. I am no longer stuck at the kiddie table!"

Here's what we learned from our interviews and discussions:

- The top three personal attributes needed to make a successful transition to HR business partner are curiosity, accountability, and intelligence (not just knowing facts and data or having business savvy but all kinds of organizational and emotional intelligence and knowledge). HR consultants lacking in these attributes were more likely to give up, fail or leave the organization.
- Typically 30-45% of the original group of HR professionals successfully make the transition. Some leave immediately and some select out over time. Doing an upfront assessment and directly communicating individual fit with changed business needs helped smooth the change for both the employee and the organization.

GET MORE
SOLUTION
DETAILS



GO TO
LSA GLOBAL
WEBSITE



The Exact Expertise to
Ignite and Sustain Performance™

#3 Operational Processes Must Be Streamlined and Working Well

In order for HR consultants to function as business partners, they need to be freed from routine daily tasks that do not add value.

Streamlining operational HR processes can be accomplished through technology and centralized operations groups. Turning over routine tasks such as processing new hire paperwork, salary increases, and benefit changes to either self-service processes or centralized operations groups saved the HR consultant over 50% of his/her time.

Without streamlined processes in place, reaching the goal of being a value-added business partner is impossible. During the transition period, this is also where the rubber hits the road. Internal clients get upset if their operational needs are not met and if they are not seeing value from the new HR business partners. For those in HR who opt not to become a business partner, applying their expertise in operational areas or centers of excellence is a great career alternative and is a critical role within the company.

#4 Leadership, Leadership, Leadership

In any change effort we know how critical great leadership is in championing the shift. It is essential that leaders keep people motivated, communicate successes, influence the businesses and sponsor programs that develop the skills and abilities of the HR consultants.

The HR executive team must provide introductions, opportunities, and mentoring to the HR consultants as well as consistently influence the business leaders to work with HR in new ways. This is often done through pilot programs. As long as the desired results are achieved, these pilot programs are the quickest way to gain credibility with the business.

Consistent and focused HR executive leadership is needed to implement the new HR role quickly. This includes both a focus on coaching HR business partners and leading the change with the business partners each and every day.

Throughout the transformation, constant communication between HR and the business is key. Sharing information on the transformation as well as creating quick wins should be the focus. In one company, a strategic objective of reducing turnover was set. HR developed a simple but predictable communication plan, including a weekly e-mail message to all managers about the initiatives, their role and related measures of employee turnover. The HR business partners worked with senior management to ensure their targets were met. Initiatives were shared across business units in terms of their progress toward the target. In addition, a monthly conference call among the HR business partners was held with an opportunity for questions, answers, development and coaching. Focusing everyone on this key strategy to reduce turnover created a win-win for HR and their business partners.

GET MORE
SOLUTION
DETAILS



GO TO
LSA GLOBAL
WEBSITE



The Exact Expertise to
Ignite and Sustain Performance™

#5 Ongoing Development and Learning

At every client organization interviewed, HR business partners were provided training in a variety of areas. Consulting skills and business acumen were top priorities, along with continuous learning in HR and organization development, organization effectiveness, strategy development, talent management, compensation and performance management. Clients expect that HR business partners be broad subject matter experts. The ongoing learning through workshops, coaching, action learning projects, feedback and self-reflection are a continuing developmental process during the journey and beyond.

Many clients also recognized that the skills of consulting and business acumen were as critically important for the professionals who were not involved in the centers of excellence. The more everyone spoke a common language and were comfortable consulting with the business on specific projects, the better the results.

HR business partners need to be more prepared for everything and anything in a fast changing business world. One executive described the training in consulting skills and business partnering as a way of improving personal credibility with the client--a key factor to success. Those who felt the journey was an uphill struggle recognized they lacked the ability to build credibility and relationships with the business partners.

Summary

From our discussions, we heard that the process of moving to the HR business partner role can be a long journey if not approached in the right way from the beginning. The clients who were successful took time upfront for planning. Success requires objective assessment and a realization that not everyone in HR will do well in the new role of HR Business Partner. It takes a person with strong skills, competencies and broad HR and business subject matter expertise to be successful.

It is also important to recognize that the HR role change is against the backdrop of a major culture shift that requires excellent change management, streamlined operational processes, solid leadership, collaboration without boundaries and motivated people who want to make it happen. Continuing their development in order to grow in their new roles is critical for success.

To eat at the big table requires execution of these factors and then ongoing coaching to get to taste dessert.

GET MORE
SOLUTION
DETAILS



HAVE AN
LSA EXPERT
CONTACT ME

GO TO
LSA GLOBAL
WEBSITE

Call Us Toll-Free 800.889.6452

Copyright ©2010 LSA Global. All Rights Reserved. All copyrights, trademarks, service marks and product names are copyrights, trademarks, service marks, or registered trademarks of LSA Global or its Partners.



The Exact Expertise to
Ignite and Sustain Performance™

We help make companies more competitive through people.

Founded in 1995 on the principle that training "by itself" will not drive tangible change or business results, we work with a select group of clients to get the most out of their people. Every training and consulting solution we provide increases revenue, decreases costs, or raises productivity.

Who we work with

Our clients are typically mid-market business leaders who believe that investing in people is vital to their success. The majority come from the high-tech, life-sciences, and service industries and often lack the internal resources or expertise to get the job done. They want more than what traditional training and consulting approaches can deliver.

What we do

We get results. Our one-stop-shop offerings range from creating a high performance culture, to outsourcing the training function, to designing and delivering targeted learning solutions. We excel in seven key practice areas: assessment, sales, loyalty, leadership, management, project management, and measurement.

How we do it

We partner with our clients in a way that makes sense for their unique situation. First we identify the key metrics they want to improve. Then we assemble a dedicated team of experts who have successfully solved similar problems with similar clients. Our expertise and flexibility allow us to move the performance needle faster and farther than anyone else in our industry.

Our Guarantee

We are fiercely devoted to the success of our clients and guarantee results.



The Exact Expertise to
Ignite and Sustain Performance™

Our clients tells us that we are different.

Our clients tell us that we save them both time and money. Our clients tell us that they appreciate access to certified best-in-class experts who help them to move the needle.

Our sales clients

confirm that they have grown sales by 40%, increased units sold by 42%, increased average pricing by 12%, and closed over 50% of their pipeline.

Our customer loyalty clients

confirm that their customer revenue per household increased by 18%, repeat calls decreased by 48.4%, single contact resolution increased by 6.1% and their overall customer satisfaction increased by 10%.

Our leadership and management clients

decrease their costs by up to 50%, increase speed-to-productivity by 60%, accelerate promotions by 20%, decrease unwanted attrition by up to 40%, and report an additional \$13m to their bottom-line.


Our project management clients

inform us that, by regularly completing projects that meet or exceed expectations, they have become an anomaly in the world where most projects disappoint or fail.

Request an LSA Expert
Contact Me >

LSA Client wins 2010..  2010
Bersin & Associates
Leadership Development Program
Excellence Award
[Learn More](#) >

 **Health Check**
Get FREE Best Practice Diagnostic >

 **Voice of the Customer**
See What Our Clients Say >



The Exact Expertise to Ignite and Sustain Performance™

Representative Clients

We are fiercely devoted to the success of our clients and proud that over 85% of our business comes from repeat business with satisfied clients.



97.5% client satisfaction

98.2% recommend LSA

98% solution satisfaction

129% knowledge gain

800+ Assessment and Measurement Projects

45+ Client Case Studies

100+ Client Testimonials

Top 10% Certified Experts