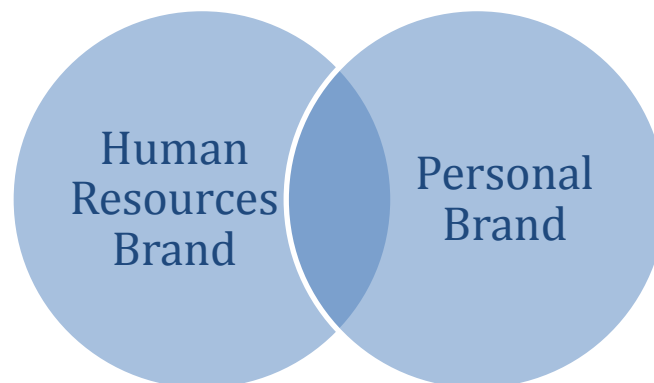


# Develop Your Human Resources Career and Brand

Building our human resources career takes thought, planning and on-going development. Understanding what is necessary to be relevant and marketable in the profession is essential in addition to identifying our value-add, aspirations and differentiators. How do you want to be known as an individual, and as a human resources professional? Have you defined how you set yourself apart and stand out in a sea of talented human resource professionals?



Defining your brand has different layers starting with your organizational culture which will set the foundation or context, followed by the human resource function's brand within your organization, and lastly your own personal brand. There will clearly be some overlap between the Human Resource brand and your personal brand; however, it is important to differentiate between the two.



At the very least, start by asking yourself the following questions:

- How would I describe the culture at my organization and how does that impact the human resources brand?
- What is the 'Human Resources Brand'? Is it what it should be? If not, what should it be? Where/what are the gaps?
- Have you thought about your own 'Personal Brand' within the Human Resources brand? Where is the overlap AND how do you set yourself apart?

The human resources field has evolved so much over the last several decades and continues to as the marketplace becomes more global, competitive and complex. The demands and pressures faced by executives, managers and employees grow more difficult on a daily basis with the changing economics and demographics. One thing that remains constant is the on-going role of the Human Resources function as a key one in helping organizations gain market share. Developing our human resources career requires us to have the appropriate skills and competencies to assist our organizations succeed. We have all read the various lists of required skills and competencies which are what we want to work towards enhancing in our own portfolio of talents and capabilities. Throughout our career, we want to continuously assess our own strengths against these requirements, identify areas for development to stay current and possess the right mix of skills to be valued in the human resources field.

Here are **top 5 competencies** that can make the difference in helping to **build a strong human resources career and brand**:



1) **Business and Financial Acumen** – understand your organization’s vision, mission and strategy in order to align human resource initiatives with business goals, objectives and deliverables; understand the bottom line, manage costs and be accountable for financial results

2) **Leadership** – lead by example, set the tone for effective leadership, be a visionary; empower others to learn, act and lead; role model behaviors of exemplary leadership, be positive and optimistic, and create an environment of trust

3) **Catalyst for Change** – be the one that not only manages changes but the one that drives it and leads it; initiate trends and practices necessary for desirable organizational outcomes and results; take bold steps and actions that will ensure best strategies for attracting, retaining and developing talent in order to gain competitive advantage within your industry

4) **Strategy vs. Tactical Focus** – it is important to create and manage a strong operational and tactical base in order to focus on strategy; have well defined goals that are measurable and aligned with business strategy (both short-term and long-term), partner with your leaders to drive results through pro-active human resource initiatives, provide technical content expertise, have a pulse of the market and your organization’s competitive positioning, build brand awareness, and be the champion for influencing and creating a people-oriented culture

5) **Confidence** – last, but not least, is a great deal of confidence in yourself and your capabilities; trust and believe in your ability to influence and lead others; be able to stand up – push back and make important stands as necessary, take well-thought out risks as needed in the best interest of the organization and its people

Invest in developing your human resources career methodically and deliberately. Be strategic and pro-active with your intentions; own your career and take charge of managing it effectively! Have a plan and stay true to it by doing the following:

- Know your competencies, skills, strengths, weaknesses, interests and values; assess and evaluate regularly; leverage strengths and uncover potential to be further developed
- Do your homework and stay current in the human resources field and your area(s) of specialty; investigate sought after skills that are in demand; identify areas you may fall short and skills needing to be refined as well as steps to do so
- Be goal-oriented; establish short and long term personal and professional goals; keep a running list of your accomplishments; establish where the gaps are preventing you from reaching these goals
- Prepare an action plan that will allow you to fill these gaps – both personally and professionally; reach out to your network of peers, colleagues, managers, contacts and other resources to assist you
- Follow up and evaluate your plan; be disciplined and make yourself accountable to a specific timetable; revisit regularly to review, make necessary adjustments and follow through



The demand for talented human resource professionals is growing. Work on developing your human resource career and your personal brand. Be prepared and comfortable to talk about yourself in this way. Determine your personal brand – the ways you add value, your unique differentiators that make you who you are and allow you to stand apart. Work on defining, building and articulating your personal brand. Advocate for yourself and market yourself when opportunities present themselves. Be genuine, sincere and authentic in highlighting your talents and accomplishments. Invest in your development with these suggested tips:

- Be well read on current trends and practices in H.R.
- Actively engage in professional associations within H.R. and your industry
- Get involved on committees and/or serve on boards
- Give back to the H.R. field as well as your community
- Seek out mentors, trusted advisors and sponsors
- Continue your education and learning – courses, certifications, degrees
- Build your network and stay close to it – nurture relationships
- Push yourself out of your comfort zone to try new things
- Take some risks allowing you to grow and explore
- Build a reputation of expertise and be a sought-after resource

When we engage in career planning, not only do we put ourselves in a position to be driving our career but we will be developing ourselves in a way that makes us more relevant and marketable. It is a very exciting time for the Human Resources field which has been described as a 'career of the future'. As the workplace continues to be highly competitive on a global basis, there is more focus on the need for effective talent management practices and total rewards programs as a key to success for organizations. Stay relevant and marketable - develop your Human Resources career and your personal brand!

Rita Balian Allen is the president of Rita B. Allen Associates, [www.ritaballenassociates.com](http://www.ritaballenassociates.com), a provider of career management/talent management consulting and executive coaching services located in Waltham, Mass., with specialty areas in leadership development, management training and career development. She is also a Lecturer at Northeastern University and Bentley University.