Business partners exist in all four roles defined in the multiple-role model (see Figure 2-1), not just in the strategic role.

Strategic partners (top left cell) are business partners because they align HR systems with business strategy and set HR priorities for a business entity. Administrative experts (bottom left cell) are business partners because they ensure that employee contributions to the business remain high, in terms of both employee commitment and competence. Change agents (top right cell) are business partners because they ensure that employee contributions to the business remain high, in terms of both employee commitment and competence. Employee champions (bottom right cell) are business partners because they ensure that employee contributions to the business remain high, in terms of both employee commitment and competence. Change agents (top right cell) are business partners because they help businesses through transformations and to adapt to changing business conditions. Being a business partner requires competence in diagnosing organizations, reengineering processes, listening and responding to employees, and managing cultural transformation. The HR business partner adds value to a firm through strategy execution, administrative efficiency, employee commitment, and cultural change.

HR professionals who work primarily in any one role should have no lack of respect for those working in the others. In a play, the entire ensemble contributes to success. If one actor or actress becomes arrogant and disrespectful of the others, the entire production suffers. So, too, in human resources. Each of the four roles is essential to the overall partnership role. Too often, businesses today esteem the HR strategic partner and/or change agent roles while discounting the administrative expert and employee champion roles as traditional and dated. This thinking drives wedges among HR professionals and weakens the overall effectiveness of the HR function.

**Implications of Multiple Roles for HR Professionals**

As discussed above and illustrated in Figure 2-1, HR professionals may add value to a business in four ways: They can help execute strategy, build infrastructure, ensure employee contribution, and manage transformation and change.

**Assessing the Current Quality of the HR Function**

The multiple-role model can help in assessing the overall quality of HR services. The HR role-assessment survey in the appendix to this chapter provides one effective and operationalizes specific questions for each role, and the scoring sheet, information. First, the total score indicates HR services perception of high quality, second the allocation current perception of the picture of the HR function. Most companies the operational quadrant consistent with tradition: for employee contributions, enhancing employee concerns to the position and change role.
e multiple-role model because they align priorities for a business. Business partners because of design and delivery (cell) are business partners to the business and align competence. Change in the business is aligning businesses with business conditions. Diagnosing organizations, diagnosing organizations, employees, and managers adds value to a firm's employee commitment. One role should not play the entire ensemble comes arrogant from disapprovers. So, too, in human resources overall partnership role. The scoring sheet, included with the survey, provides two kinds of information. First, the total score for all four roles (ranging from 50 to 200) constitutes a general assessment of the overall quality of HR services within a business. Total scores above 160 may be considered high, indicating a perception of high quality in delivery of HR services. Total scores below 90 indicate HR services perceived as being of low quality overall.

Second, the allocation of the points among the four roles indicates the current perception of the quality of HR services for each, providing a picture of the HR function that allows a business to evaluate it more effectively. Most companies that have collected these data scored higher in the operational quadrants and lower in the strategic quadrants, a result consistent with traditional HR roles. The largest range of scores is found for employee contribution, with some firms shown to be heavily invested in enhancing employee commitment while others appear to have relegated employee concerns to the back burner. In general, the management transformation and change role receives the lowest scores.

Reviewing the Evolution of the HR Function

The HR role-assessment survey in the appendix provides not only a view of current overall quality of HR services but also an assessment of the evolution of a business's HR services. This can be done either by changing the questions to request perceptions of "past versus present or future" quality for each role or by repeating the survey over time.

Had a business collected this data several times over the past twenty years, for example, the evolution of its HR roles would have been evident, showing, most likely, movement from a focus on operational roles to a focus on strategic roles. Focus on employee contribution has also decreased in most businesses over the past two decades. In recent years, most firms have undertaken productivity initiatives, such as reengineering, downsizing, and consolidation, which demand that HR professionals focus on infrastructure and their roles as administrative experts. Over the same period, an emphasis on strategic intent initiatives, such as globalization, customer...
service, and multi-generational product design, have encouraged HR focus on strategy execution and fulfillment of the strategic partner role. Finally, culture change initiatives, such as process improvements, culture change, and empowerment, have meant that the HR professional must increasingly manage such culture change in the capacity of change agent. This shift in emphasis has meant that HR professionals have done less and less in their role as employee champion to manage employee contribution.

By using the HR role-assessment survey, businesses can identify areas in which the HR function is growing stronger or weaker in each role.

Comparing HR and Line Manager Views of the HR Function

Another use for the HR role-assessment survey in the appendix is to solicit responses from line managers as well as HR professionals and to compare the results. Asking both HR professionals and line managers to rate the current state of HR performance in each of the four roles yields an audit of the extent to which the two perspectives align. Examination of the results can contribute to improved understanding of the HR function and company expectations in a number of ways.

**Matched expectations**

Matched expectations mean that HR professionals and line managers see the HR function in the same way. Alignment of HR and line expectations may be good news since it indicates agreement on the roles and delivery of HR services. Alignment may, however, be bad news. In one firm, for example, the HR and line managers agreed that current delivery of HR services was in the 15 to 20 point range (out of 50) for each of the four roles. But while this alignment implied that HR was meeting line managers' expectations, these expectations were uniformly low. Meeting low expectations implies that neither HR professionals nor line managers had a stretch vision for HR. The multiple-role framework offered here presents a way to define stretch goals, to raise expectations, and to specify value-added targets for HR professionals.

**Mismatched expectations**

Mismatched expectations occur when the perceptions of line managers and of HR professionals differ. The most common mismatch seen on surveys collected thus far shows

HR Function versus

A business may find, in HR professionals do n't time, it should find that share a unified vision. It was found that the indi were committed and partners with business experts in their domain. understand and meet, appropriate in talented individuals w were acknowledged, A team of HR ex competencies. At the their concerns, open
encouraged HR focus on a partner role. Finally, culture change, which must increasingly be driven by an agent. This shift in the organization is leading HR to be less and less in their traditional roles.

sses can identify areas of weakness in each role.

of the HR Function

The appendix is to solicitions and to compare the roles and deliver news. In one firm, for example, current delivery of HR is rated on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being the lowest and 5 being the highest. The audit, which is designed to solicit managers to rate the HR function and company roles and line managers see HR and line expectations on the roles and delivery news. In one firm, for example, the current delivery of HR was meeting line managers' expectations. Meetings low expectations of line managers had a stretch and had to specify value-added services.

collected thus far shows HR professionals rating themselves higher than do their line managers. In these cases, HR professionals perceived their work to be better than did the clients of that work. Such positive self-rating, isolated from correction by client perceptions, may lead to self-deception and denial, where HR professionals believe that their services are appropriate and add value to a firm but the clients do not.

In a number of firms, client surveys include assessments of HR not only by line managers but also by employees. In one case, such client surveys found the HR function to be the lowest-rated function in the firm. The firm's HR professionals felt they were designing and delivering excellent services, but these services were either misunderstood by employees or failed to meet their needs. The HR professionals had been judging their services by their own good intentions, while their clients were judging them by the impact and results of the services received.

The HR role-assessment survey thus constitutes a diagnostic tool for identifying the expectations of line managers and other HR clients. The data generated by comparing ratings made by HR professionals, line managers, and others can lead to productive discussions in which expectations are set and shared, and roles are clarified and communicated.

HR Function versus Individual HR Professionals

A business may find, in doing the above audits of HR roles, that individual HR professionals do not have competence in all four roles, but at the same time, it should find that the function—as an aggregate of individuals—does have a unified vision and competency. In one company, for example, it was found that the individuals fulfilling the components of the HR function were committed and competent; the field HR professionals were strategic partners with business leaders; HR functional leaders were administrative experts in their domains; employee relations experts worked effectively to understand and meet employee needs; and organizational effectiveness experts appropriately managed change. As a team, however, this group of talented individuals was woeful. In one-on-one interviews, these HR professionals acknowledged that they did not respect or even like one another.

A team of HR experts needs to forge individual talent into leveraged competencies. At the above firm, the individual HR experts began to share their concerns, openly discuss differences, and focus on common goals and
objectives. With focus, time, and commitment, tensions and distrust were overcome; resources and lessons were shared. They began to speak with one voice about the purposes and value of the HR function. They began to call on each other and leverage each other's strengths. In brief, they began to work as a team.

Use of the survey as a diagnostic instrument may thus indicate that although individuals in a business have unique talents in one of the four roles, the overall HR function needs to unify these individual talents to gain strength and efficacy.

Clarifying Responsibility for Each Role

Each time a business reviews the multiple roles of HR, this question arises: What is the line managers' responsibility in each cell? This is a crucial question and has a two-part answer.

First, HR professionals in a business have unique responsibility and accountability for ensuring that the deliverables from each role are fulfilled. If, for example, a rating of 10 represents the complete accomplishment of the deliverables for each role, it is HR professionals who own the achievement of a 10 rating.

Second, accomplishing the goals and designing the processes for achieving the goals are different issues. While HR professionals own the accomplishment of each of the four roles, they may not have to do all the work of the four roles. That is, HR professionals must guarantee that a 10 be achieved for each role, but they don't have to do all the work to make that 10 happen. Depending on the process established for reaching the goal, the work may be shared by line managers, outside consultants, employees, technology, or other delivery mechanisms for doing HR work.

In many cases, responsibility for delivering the four roles is shared, as indicated by an allocation of points. Figure 2-4 indicates one prevailing pattern of allocation. The allocation of points clearly will vary by firm. The distinction, however, between commitment to the outcome (10/10) and delivery of the outcome (sharing responsibility or dividing the 10 points) remains a consistently important point for discussion. HR professionals need to guarantee the outcome and to help define the shared responsibility for delivering it. As are the roles themselves, delivery processes and allocations, which are discussed below.

Management of Employee Delivery

The employee contribution in the recent past. Traditionally, HR was responsible for delivery of employees. In other words or concerns, HR's job was to have the skills needed to
is and distrust were an to speak with action. They began strengths. In brief, they y thus indicate that s in one of the four individual talents to

3, this question arises: cell? This is a crucial que responsibility and each role are fulfilled. ete accomplishment of who own the achieve-

4 indicates one prevailing clearly will vary by firmnt to the outcome (10) onsibility or dividing the point for discussion. HR and to help define these roles themselves, delivery.

**Figure 2-4 HR Role in Building a Competitive Organization:**

**Shared Responsibility**

**FUTURE/STRATEGIC FOCUS**

**PROCESS**

- Line Managers 5
- Field HR 5
- Corporate HR 5
- Outsource 3

**PEOPLE**

- External Consultant 3
- Line Managers 4
- HR 3
- Line Managers 6
- Employees 2

**DAY-TO-DAY OPERATIONAL FOCUS**

processes and allocations are subject to change and trends, some of which are discussed below.

**Management of employee contribution**

The employee contribution HR role has experienced the greatest change in the recent past. Traditionally, HR was allocated 8 out of every 10 points for delivery of employee commitment. Today, many firms are dividing delivery: 2 points for HR, 6 points for line managers, and 2 points for employees. In other words, in many firms, when employees have grievances or concerns, HR's job is not to fix the problem but to ensure that managers have the skills needed to respond effectively to employees and that employees
themselves have the skills to overcome challenges. Over time, many firms hope the employees in high performing teams will have even more responsibility for their own development.

**Management of firm infrastructure**

For efficient delivery, many firms today put 5 of the 10 points for infrastructure HR services into corporate/shared service organizations. This shift is counterintuitive, but has its own logic. In a traditional setting, promotion to the corporate level usually means doing more strategic work. In many modern organizations, however, promotion to the corporate level means becoming part of a shared service organization that performs administrative work in order to remove the administrative burden from the field HR professionals. The remaining 5 points are divided between outsourcing administrative transactions (3 points) and information technology (2 points). Outsourcing HR activities has been an experiment at many firms that are trying to find ways to reduce HR costs while increasing the quality of services. Information technology uses computers to do much of the administrative work of HR; over time, that use will probably increase.

**Strategic HRM**

The responsibility for strategy execution in most firms today is shared between HR professionals and line managers (5 points each). As partners, each brings to the strategy discussion unique skills and talents. Together, they team up to accomplish business goals.

**Management of transformation and change**

In their responsibilities for culture change, HR professionals are asked to deliver approximately 3 of the 10 points, while line managers are allocated 4 points and outside consultants the remaining 3. The low allocation of 3 points to HR professionals indicates that many of them are not fully comfortable or competent in the role of change agent. Traditionally, HR professionals have been distant from the change process. In fact, HR work was viewed as antithetical to change, with HR systems providing impediments to, not impetus for, change. The emerging responsibility for transformation currently rests with external consultants, with many firms delegating responsibility for driving change to external consulting firms.

External consultants offer considerable advantages in the competence associated with their role. The paradoxes inherent in the Strategic Partner versus employee champion role create a tension that must be addressed by the senior management team. The challenges of transformation and change, such as those described by Fraiser, illustrate the need for a balance between the strategic vision of management and the operational reality of the workforce. Without this balance, the efforts to drive change may not be realized.
at time, many firms even more responsi-
points for infrastruc-
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work. In many
corporate level means
forms administrative
from the field HR
between outsourcing
ation technology (2
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rs to do much of the
probably increase.

External consultants offer disciplined, objective approaches to transformation, with the competence and confidence to make the change happen.

**Paradoxes Inherent in Multiple HR Roles**

**Strategic Partner versus Employee Champion**

Success in the multiple-role framework requires that HR professionals balance the tension inherent in being a strategic partner on the one hand and an employee champion on the other. As strategic partners with managers, HR professionals partner with managers and are seen as part of management. Taken to an extreme, this may alienate employees from both HR and management. Employees at one company that was moving its HR function into strategic partnership saw the HR professionals, whom they felt provided the only channel through which their concerns were voiced to management, participating in more management meetings, becoming active in strategic planning, and becoming synonymous with management. As a result, the employees felt betrayed and rated the HR function as not meeting their needs.

As employee champions in partnership with managers and employees, HR professionals ensure that the concerns and needs of employees are voiced to management. Taken to an extreme, this may alienate the HR function from management, who may not want to work with HR people whom they see as insensitive to business realities and advocates of employees.

Resolving this conflict requires that all parties—HR, management, and employees—recognize that HR professionals can both represent employee needs and implement management agendas, be the voice of the employee and the voice of management, act as partner to both employees and managers. A classic example of a successful response to this paradox is provided by Doug Fraser, who joined the Chrysler board of directors in the late 1970s as part of a plan for employee investment in the firm. When union members challenged Fraser’s new “management” commitment, he retorted with something like, “How can I better meet your needs than by sitting with and influencing management?” To be a successful partner to both employees and management requires that both sides trust the HR professional to achieve a balance between the needs of these potentially competing stake-
When HR professionals are not called on to represent employees' concerns to management, uninformed decisions may be made. It is not uncommon, for example, for merger and acquisition decisions to be made based solely on financial and product/strategic analyses that demonstrate the value of the venture; only after the decision is made is HR asked to weave the two companies together. Sadly, more ventures fail because of cultural and human differences than because of product and strategic differences. Where HR professionals are asked to represent employee and organizational concerns during pre-merger diagnosis, more informed decisions are made about all costs of merger activities, including the merger of cultures and people.

Change Agents versus Administrative Experts

HR professionals must also balance the need for change, innovation, and transformation with the need for continuity, discipline, and stability. This tension between these roles as change agents and as administrative experts yields a number of paradoxes that must be managed. Businesses must balance stability and change. A business must have stability to ensure continuity in products, services, and manufacturing. Businesses that change constantly lose identity and chase mythical successes that never materialize. On the other hand, businesses that fail to change in the end simply fail.

Businesses must balance the past and the future. A business must honor its past but also move beyond it. It must recognize that past successes ensure current survival but that only by letting go of the past will the future arrive. Old cultures should ground new cultures, not become impediments to change.

Businesses must balance the benefits of free agency and control. A business needs to encourage free agency and autonomy in making decisions, sharing information, and soliciting ideas. Conversely, a business requires discipline among employees to make the value of the whole greater than that of the parts, to forge individual efforts into team accomplishment, and to create boundaries for freedom.

Businesses must balance efficiency and innovation. New ideas and programs require risk capital, both economic and human. HR professionals need to encourage risk and innovation while maintaining efficiency. Thus, risks need to be bounded, not haphazard.

To resolve these and cultural change need to be new cultures. In practices and that administration, advocates of drama required to support the credibility and exceed a role of the HR professionals. The administrative deliverables require to add value to execution, administration and change. HR bles to their business professionals in each of professional of the future employee champion, a
resent employees’ con-
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ions to be made based
on HR asked to weave the
because of cultural and
egal differences. Where
and organizational con-
clusions are made about
of cultures and people.

To resolve these and other paradoxes, HR professionals dealing with

cultural change need to be both cultural guardians of the past and architects
of the new cultures. In practice, this means that in discussions with those
who want to move slowly, HR professionals need to drive for dramatic
change. On the other hand, in discussions with those who want to demolish
history and tradition, HR professionals need to be advocates of moderation
and respect for earned wisdom. It means that when working to create new
cultures, HR professionals should simultaneously consider the impact of
the new culture on administrative processes (for example, how to hire,
train, and reward employees in a manner consistent with the new culture)
and recognize the hold that the old culture retains over both employees
and company practices.

This balancing act requires that new cultures lead to new administrative
practices and that administrative practices support culture change. Some-
times, advocates of dramatic culture change, not realizing the infrastructure
required to support the change, may make bold statements that stretch
credibility and exceed a business’s capacity for implementation. Part of the
role of the HR professional as change agent is to moderate such statements.
The administrative infrastructure may be the last thing to change as com-
panies forge ahead in new strategic directions.

SUMMARY

Being an effective HR professional does not mean simply moving from
operational to strategic work. It means learning to master both operational
and strategic processes and people. Success in these roles requires an under-
standing of the deliverables, metaphors, and actions specific to each.

1. Deliverables are the guaranteed outcomes of HR. They represent what
HR does to add value to a firm. HR has four generic deliverables: strategy
execution, administrative efficiency, employee commitment, and transfor-
mation and change. HR professionals articulate and guarantee these delivera-
bles to their businesses. Metaphors are the images that characterize HR
professionals in each of their roles. The four images that characterize the HR
professional of the future include strategic partner, administrative expert,
employee champion, and change agent. HR professionals as business part-
ners operate in each of the four roles. Actions are the personal activities and
organizational systems undertaken by HR professionals and line managers to fulfill these roles.

For line managers, these new HR roles—each encompassing its deliverable, metaphor, and action—require specific responses:

- Define the desired and feasible deliverables from HR activities.
- Operationalize, measure, and communicate the value created by HR.
- Define who has what responsibility and accountability for HR activities.

HR professionals, too, in order to meet the demands of their new roles, must learn to act in new ways and with new expectations. They must accomplish the following goals:

- Stop talking about being a business partner and do it.
- Define business partner in terms of value created for the business.
- Profile accurately—with the participation of their clients—the current and the desired quality of their deliverables.

For today's HR professionals to deliver value to a firm, they must fulfill multiple, not single, roles. They must specify deliverables to the firm from each of their roles, define images that characterize these roles, and act to accomplish the deliverables pertaining to their roles. They must also recognize the paradoxical position they occupy within a firm, accepting accountability for accomplishing results while building the shared commitment needed to achieve those results.

**APPENDIX**

**Human Resource Role**

_Bruce Ulrich and Jill Co__

The attached survey explores your business. Considering the corporate HR if you are not on the current quality of each (1 is low, 5 is high).

**HR helps the organization .**
1. accomplish business go
2. improve operating effic
3. take care of employees’
4. adapt to change

**HR participates in . . .**
5. the process of defining
6. delivering HR processe
7. improving employee co
8. shaping culture change

**HR makes sure that . . .**
9. HR strategies are align
10. HR processes are effic
11. HR policies and progra employees
12. HR processes and progr to change

**HR effectiveness is measured**
13. help make strategy hap
14. efficiently deliver HR ti
15. help employees meet p
16. help an organization ar

**HR is seen as . . .**
17. a business partner
18. an administrative exper
19. a champion for employ
20. a change agent
APPENDIX

Human Resource Role-Assessment Survey
Dave Ulrich and Jill Conner

The attached survey explores different roles that the HR function may play within your business. Considering the HR professionals in your business entity (for example, corporate HR if you are at corporate, business unit HR if you are in a business), please rate the current quality of each of the following HR activities, using a five-point scale (1 is low; 5 is high).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HR helps the organization . . .</th>
<th>Current Quality (1-5)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. accomplish business goals</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2. improve operating efficiency</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3. take care of employees' personal needs</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. adapt to change</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>HR participates in . . .</th>
<th>Current Quality (1-5)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5. the process of defining business strategies</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. delivering HR processes</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. improving employee commitment</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. shaping culture change for renewal and transformation</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
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<tr>
<th>HR makes sure that . . .</th>
<th>Current Quality (1-5)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9. HR strategies are aligned with business strategy</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>10. HR processes are efficiently administered</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>11. HR policies and programs respond to the personal needs of employees</td>
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<td>12. HR processes and programs increase the organization's ability to change</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>HR effectiveness is measured by its ability to . . .</th>
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<tr>
<td>13. help make strategy happen</td>
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<tr>
<td>14. efficiently deliver HR processes</td>
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<tr>
<td>15. help employees meet personal needs</td>
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<tr>
<td>16. help an organization anticipate and adapt to future issues</td>
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<tr>
<th>HR is seen as . . .</th>
<th>Current Quality (1-5)</th>
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<tr>
<td>17. a business partner</td>
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<tr>
<td>18. an administrative expert</td>
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<td>19. a champion for employees</td>
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<tr>
<td>20. a change agent</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
HR spends time on . . .
21. strategic issues
22. operational issues
23. listening and responding to employees
24. supporting new behaviors for keeping the firm competitive

HR is an active participant in . . .
25. business planning
26. designing and delivering HR processes
27. listening and responding to employees
28. organization renewal, change, or transformation

HR works to . . .
29. align HR strategies and business strategy
30. monitor administrative processes
31. offer assistance to help employees meet family and personal needs
32. reshape behavior for organizational change

HR develops processes and programs to . . .
33. link HR strategies to accomplish business strategy
34. efficiently process documents and transactions
35. take care of employee personal needs
36. help the organization transform itself

HR's credibility comes from . . .
37. helping to fulfill strategic goals
38. increasing productivity
39. helping employees meet their personal needs
40. making change happen
The Changing Nature of Human Resources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strategic Partner</th>
<th>Administrative Expert</th>
<th>Employee Champion</th>
<th>Change Agent</th>
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<td>4</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>Question 37 Score</td>
<td>Question 38 Score</td>
<td>Question 39 Score</td>
<td>Question 40 Score</td>
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</table>

### Scoring Sheet for HR Role Survey

Using the assessments in the quality column of the survey, complete this worksheet. Put your score from the quality column next to the number for each question, then add the total for each of the four roles. See pages 38-45 for information on understanding and using the results of the survey.
HUMAN RESOURCE CHAMPIONS

THE NEXT AGENDA FOR ADDING VALUE AND DELIVERING RESULTS

Dave Ulrich

HARVARD BUSINESS SCHOOL PRESS
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS