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www.traciesponenberg.com

**HR Mythbusters:
Debunking
Common Industry
Misconceptions**

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Dictionary

Definitions from [Oxford Languages](#) · [Learn more](#)

myth

noun

noun: **myth**; plural noun: **myths**

1. a traditional story, especially one concerning the early history of a people or explaining some natural or social phenomenon, and typically involving **supernatural beings** or events.
"ancient Celtic myths"

Similar:

- traditional stories or legends **collectively**.
"the heroes of Greek myth"

2. a widely held but false belief or idea.
"he wants to dispel the myth that sea kayaking is too risky or too strenuous"

Similar:

- a **misrepresentation** of the truth.
"attacking the party's irresponsible myths about privatization"

Similar:

- a **fictional** or **imaginary** person or thing.
"nobody had ever heard of Simon's mysterious friend—Anna said he was a myth"
- an **exaggerated** or **idealized conception** of a person or thing.
"the book is a scholarly study of the Churchill myth"

What is an HR Myth?

Legacy Human Resources

Administrative Focus

- Largest focus on payroll, benefits administration, compliance with labor laws, record-keeping

Reactive Approach

- No strategy; react to issues as they arise

Siloed Function

- HR function separate, not integrated

One-Size-Fits-All Policies

- Creating policy for the few, not the many

Hierarchical Structure

- Top-down decisions
- HR as the enforcer

Modern Human Resources



Strategic Partner

Connecting People Strategy to Business Strategy

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging

Crucial for employee and org wellbeing

Focus on EX & Personalization

Co-creating an incredible, individual employee experience

Proactive

Prevent problems through good process, strategy and practices

Data-Driven Decisions & Tech Integration

Make data-informed decisions. Automate day-to-day functions to focus on what matters.... your people!

Myths that We'll Bust Today:

1. HR only hires and fires employees.
2. HR is not a revenue-generating department – just an administrative cost center.
3. HR is the judge, jury, and policy police.
4. HR professionals will be replaced by technology.
5. HR is easy - anyone can do it.
6. HR does not help the business grow.
7. HR is the office manager/event planner.
8. HR is not your friend - they are only there for the business.
9. HR is not strategic.

How we'll do it

- ✓ The myth
- ✓ Why does it exist?
- ✓ Bust the myth
- ✓ Case study/story
- ✓ Actionable take-aways that you can use now!



What does HR do?



MYTH #1:
HR only hires and
fires employees



BUST #1: HR is so much more!

THE PROOF

HR encompasses various functions beyond recruitment and termination, including employee experience, learning and development, performance management, organizational development, strategic workforce planning and so much more!

Only 15% of HR professionals' time is spent on recruitment and hiring (SHRM)

THE CASE STUDY

NETFLIX

Culture Deck

Eliminated Performance Reviews

Reimagined Total Rewards

ACTIONABLE TAKE-AWAY #1

"Saying HR just hires and fires is like saying a chef just boils water and pours cereal. Sure, those are part of the job, but there's a whole lot more to the recipe for success!"

- Communicate, communicate, communicate – and maybe brag a little!
- Increase your visibility in the company – get out from behind your desk/screen!
- Collaborate with other departments
- Provide training to managers and others
- Solicit feedback from your employees

GO AHEAD
UNDERESTIMATE ME
THAT'LL BE FUN



profit
center



MYTH #2:

**HR is not a revenue-generating
department – just an
administrative cost center**



BUST #2: HR is revenue generating!

THE PROOF

HR contributes to revenue generation through talent acquisition, retention, and development, which directly impact business outcomes.

Organizations with effective talent management strategies have 26% higher revenue per employee.

THE CASE STUDY



Airbnb's HR team played a strategic role in driving the company's growth and revenue generation.

By focusing on talent acquisition, employee experience, learning and development, performance management, and diversity and inclusion, HR helped build a high-performing workforce that contributed directly to Airbnb's financial success

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ACTIONABLE TAKE-AWAY #2

"Saying HR doesn't generate revenue is like saying the engine doesn't make the car go fast. Sure, it's not the flashy exterior that everyone sees, but without a well-oiled HR machine under the hood, the company's growth would quickly stall out and leave everyone stranded on the side of the road to success!"

- Align HR strategies with business objectives to demonstrate value
- Implement metrics to measure the impact of HR initiatives on financial performance.
- Collaborate with finance – speak the language of business
- Partner with sales and marketing departments
- Continuously assess and optimize HR processes to streamline workflows and reduce costs.



MYTH #3:

HR is the judge, jury

and policy police

BUST #3: HR no longer leads with compliance

THE PROOF

Compliance is important. But the employee experience is everything. We are now coaches, consultants and guides – we help our people grow. HR is a strategic partner and employee advocate

83% of HR professionals say their role has become more strategic in recent years, with 60% reporting that they are now involved in business strategy discussions at the highest levels of their organizations (SHRM)

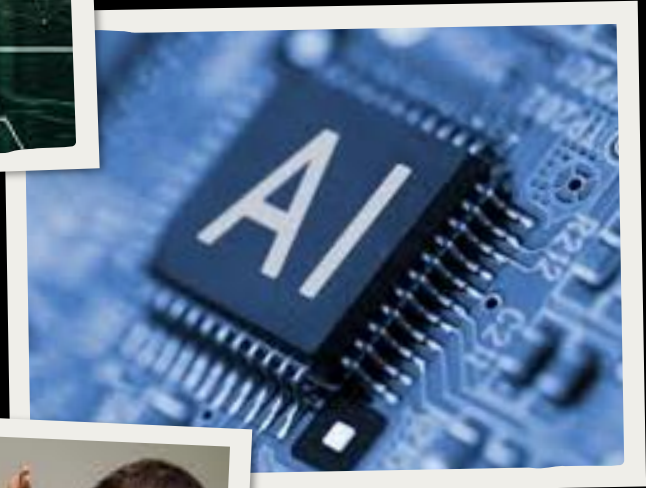
THE CASE STUDY



ACTIONABLE TAKE-AWAY #3

"Saying HR is just the judge, jury, and policy police is like saying a GPS only tells you when you've made a wrong turn. Sure, HR helps navigate company policies, but they're also the strategic co-pilot helping to map out the route to success, ensuring everyone stays on course and arrives at the destination together!"

- Communicate HR's strategic role
- Build trust with managers and employees
- Don't lead compliance first! Flip your thinking to people-first
- Look in the mirror – do you enjoy being the judge, jury and policy police? Some do. But that is no longer HR
- Implement or fully use self-service models, AI, etc
- Train your managers not to "send" people to HR. Managers actually do much of the day-to-day work HR used to



**Importance
Of Technology
Advancement
In The Business
Sector**

**MYTH #4:
HR professionals will
be replaced by
technology**

BUST #4: AI or tech will not replace you in HR, but someone who understand it might

THE PROOF

While technology can streamline certain HR processes, such as payroll and benefits administration, it cannot replace the human touch required for complex decision-making and employee relations. It can't yet replace empathy, creativity and trust.

73% of CEOs believe that AI and automation will create more jobs than they eliminate, with HR roles evolving rather than disappearing (PWC)

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THE CASE STUDY

Job reorganization and task shifting towards roles where humans have a comparative advantage are more prevalent than outright job displacement

"some jobs are always likely to be better done by humans, such as those involving empathy, social interaction and certain types of decision making."

<https://one.oecd.org/document/DELSA/ELSA/WD/SEM%282023%297/en/pdf>



ACTIONABLE TAKE-AWAY #4

AI in HR? More like AI as an HR sidekick! While AI can certainly streamline processes and crunch numbers faster than you can say 'annual performance review,' it takes a human touch to navigate the complexities of the workplace. AI might be able to sort through resumes, but can it detect the subtle nuances of a candidate's personality during an interview? Can it mediate a heated conflict between two employees with the finesse of a seasoned diplomat? I think not!

- Learn AI! You don't need to be an expert, but don't be afraid. A basic understanding will be necessary
- Focus on developing skills in areas where human judgment and empathy are irreplaceable, such as employee relations and leadership development.
- Stay informed about other emerging technologies and their potential impact on HR practices.
- Use data analytics to inform decision-making and optimize HR processes.
- Advocate for investments in training and development to upskill HR professionals for the digital age.



MYTH #5: HR is easy. Anyone can do it.

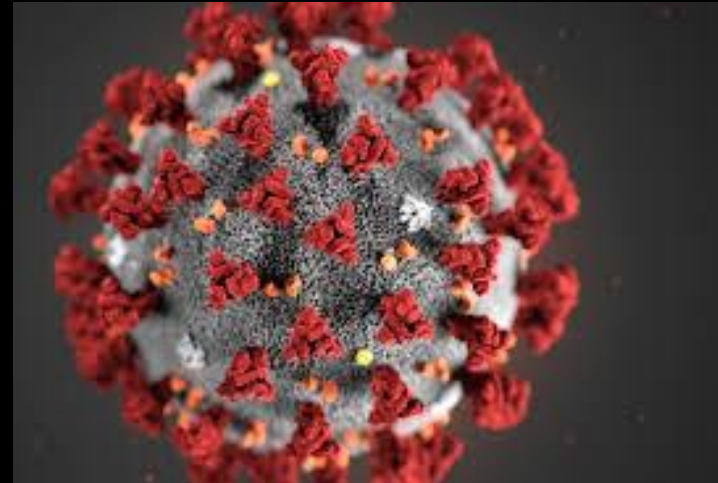
BUST #5: HAHAAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHA!!

THE PROOF

HR involves a complex set of skills and knowledge, including legal compliance, employee relations, talent management, and strategic planning, which require specialized training and experience.

86% of HR professionals hold a bachelor's degree or higher, demonstrating the level of expertise required for the role (IPMA-HR)

THE CASE STUDY



ACTIONABLE TAKE-AWAY #5

"Saying HR is easy and anyone can do it is like saying anyone can be a brain surgeon – all you need is a steady hand and a can-do attitude. But in reality, HR is a complex and critical function that requires specialized skills, knowledge, and experience. So, unless you're ready to tackle legal compliance, employee relations, and organizational strategy with the finesse of a seasoned pro, you might want to leave it to the experts!"

- Invest in ongoing professional development and certifications to enhance HR competencies.
- Build a network of HR professionals for knowledge sharing and support.
- Stay updated on changes in labor laws and regulations to ensure compliance.
- Develop strong interpersonal and communication skills to effectively interact with employees and managers.
- Seek mentorship opportunities to learn from experienced HR professionals and gain valuable insights.



power thesaurus

Synonyms for Lack of understanding

misunderstanding

incomprehension

lack of knowledge

lack of awareness

confusion



MYTH #6:

HR does not help the business grow

BUST #6: HR helps the business grow in every way

THE PROOF

HR plays a strategic role in driving business growth through talent acquisition, development, and retention, which directly impact organizational performance and competitiveness.

Companies with effective talent management practices are 2.2 times more likely to outperform their industry peers in revenue growth (McKinsey)

THE CASE STUDY



Great people. Great products.

ACTIONABLE TAKE-AWAY #6

"HR is like the root system of a tree - you might not see it, but without it, there would be no growth or stability. HR lays the foundation for business success."

"Saying HR doesn't contribute to business growth is like saying a coach doesn't contribute to a team's success. HR coaches and develops the talent that drives the company forward."

"Claiming HR doesn't support business growth is like saying a compass doesn't help a ship reach its destination. HR provides the direction and guidance needed to navigate the ever-changing business landscape."

"HR is the architect of business growth. They design the blueprints (strategies) and lay the foundation (talent and culture) upon which the company can build its success."

ACTIONABLE TAKE-AWAY #6

- Align HR strategies with business objectives to support organizational growth.
- Implement performance management systems to identify and develop high-potential employees.
- Foster a culture of innovation and continuous learning to drive business agility.
- Collaborate with business leaders to anticipate workforce needs and plan for future growth.
- Measure the impact of HR initiatives on key business metrics, such as revenue and profitability.

**MYTH #7: HR is the
office manager/
event planner.**



BUST #7: Just no.

THE PROOF

While HR may occasionally handle office events or logistics, its primary focus is on strategic people management initiatives that drive organizational success.

Only 8% of HR professionals' time is spent on event planning (HRPA)

THE CASE STUDY



ACTIONABLE TAKE-AWAY #7

"HR professionals are party planners? Sure, if by 'party' you mean navigating the complex legal landscape, managing employee relations, and strategizing to drive business success. It's a never-ending fiesta of responsibilities!"

- Delegate party planning tasks if they fall within your responsibilities
- Committees are great places for office events to be created and managed
- Clarify HR's role and responsibilities within the organization to focus on strategic priorities.
- Invest in technology solutions to streamline HR processes and free up time for strategic initiatives.
- Collaborate with department heads to align HR initiatives with organizational goals.
- Communicate HR's value proposition to senior leadership to gain support for strategic initiatives.



MYTH #8: HR is not your friend. They are only there for the business.

BUST #8: Is Finance your friend? IT? Sales?

Why do we equate HR with friendship?

THE PROOF

HR is an advocate for employees and strives to create a positive and inclusive work environment.

Employees who feel that their organization cares about their well-being are 3.5 times more likely to be engaged at work (Gallup)

THE CASE STUDY



BUST #8: Is Finance your friend? IT?

Sales? Why do we equate HR with

friendship?

I still get frustrated when people say “HR is not your friend. They are for the company.”.

Does the Finance Dept. give you personal loans? They are not your friend.

Does the IT department come to your house to fix your WiFi? They are not your friend.

Does Legal handle your real estate transaction? They are not your friend.

I get that HR does not have a great reputation for handling discrimination, harassment, or bullying complaints. But is that 100% HR’s fault or is it leadership and culture? And remember, HR is not a monolith. It is comprised of many functions, but most of all, it is comprised of people - with the vast majority of them wanting to help employees. But they don’t have to be your friend." [Nathalie Lofton-Davis](#)

ACTIONABLE TAKE-AWAY #8

"The 'HR is not your friend' myth is as outdated as a fax machine in a smartphone world. Our role is to be a strategic partner to both the company and its employees. We're here to create a fair, safe, and productive work environment where everyone can thrive. Think of us as the workplace equivalent of a good coach - we'll challenge you to be your best, support you when you need it, and always play by the rules. In today's competitive landscape, having HR in your corner is like having a secret weapon for career success."

- Build trust and rapport with employees through open communication and empathy.
- Provide resources and support for employees' personal and professional development.
- Act as a mediator and advocate for employees' concerns and grievances.
- Foster a culture of inclusivity and respect where employees feel valued and supported.
- Balance the needs of the organization with the well-being of its employees to create a positive work environment.



MYTH #9: HR is not strategic.

BUST #9: HR is the most strategic department

THE PROOF

HR plays a critical role in shaping organizational strategy through talent management, workforce planning, and culture development, directly impacting business outcomes.

Companies with highly effective HR functions are 3.5 times more likely to outperform their industry peers financially. (HBR)

THE CASE STUDY

Skill Development

DEIB

AI-assisted HR

Agile performance management

The employee voice



ACTIONABLE TAKE-AWAY #9

"Saying HR isn't strategic is like saying a chess grandmaster only knows how to move pawns. Just because we're masters at the day-to-day employee relations game doesn't mean we can't see the whole board and plan ten moves ahead. We're the ones working behind the scenes to ensure the company has the right talent"

- Proactively partner with senior leadership to understand business objectives and align HR strategies accordingly.
- Conduct regular workforce planning assessments to anticipate talent needs and mitigate skill gaps.
- Implement talent development programs to cultivate a pipeline of future leaders and ensure organizational resilience.
- Leverage data analytics to inform decision-making and measure the impact of HR initiatives on business performance.
- Advocate for HR's seat at the executive table to ensure strategic alignment and maximize organizational effectiveness.

QUESTIONS? (from GoCo)

How would you recommend using what we learn from this myth-busting session to educate friends, family, or "customers" who are facing the same myths? Thanks in advance!

so many generation so many myths! How to demystify when we are competing Glassdoor, Indeed reviews, and the like. It is not just the lunchroom and the water cooler.

Is it HRs job to fire or should managers do it with HR support?

Does AI help or hurt?

.

***Some Resources For You: Connect with my
favorite forward-thinking HR Leaders!***

Catalina Colman

Alex Seiler

Hebba Youssef

Sarika Lamont

Anessa Fike

Tara Turk-Haynes

Stacey Nordwall

Angela Howard

Kim Roher

Morgan Williams

Jessica Winder

Cassidy Edwards

Noah Warder

Cassandra Babilya

Eileen Dunn

Melissa Doman

Thank  Joy!

**Connect with Me
on LinkedIn!**



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