

Crafting the Ideal HR Leadership Team: The Essential Guide for Newly Appointed CHROs

In the post-pandemic landscape, the need for commercially viable and people-centric HR strategies is greater than ever. The world of HR has rapidly evolved in response to seismic shifts in how people work, and businesses operate. For incoming CHROs, the challenge is no longer about "demonstrating return on investment" within a 6-12 month timeframe. Organizations now need swift and effective responses to the ever-changing social and economic landscape. **The traditional 100-day "listening journey" no longer suffices; CHROs are expected to bring immediate change**, transformation, and a clear vision. Planning the ideal HR leadership team is an essential step in this process.

The following guide will help you identify the attributes needed to assemble an effective HR leadership team, given the expectation for immediate action and change.

Solutions to Consider

- **Start with Technical, then Move to Holistic Organizational Issues:** Address Compensation & Benefits, People Data & HRIS functionality, and Talent Acquisition activities from the past 12 months. These are immediate priorities that underpin any HR strategy and require prompt attention for a tangible impact. **Many CHROs prioritize assessing Compensation functionality within the first week**, ensuring they have a top-tier Head of Total Rewards as an initial step.
- **Assess Internal Capability:** Examine opportunities **to upskill individuals and identify skills gaps, succession issues, and legacy problems**. How effectively is the HR function supporting the business with generalist HR issues? Evaluate the chain of command, support for key business units, and service level agreements when issues arise. Consider whether HR Business Partners are genuinely partnering with the business and whether the current model is working or not. These are questions that need swift answers.
- **Identify Your Successor Early:** Although it may seem premature, **identifying a potential successor is crucial**. While you may be the captain of the ship, **you need someone who can drive it**. CHROs often face pressure because, despite having a clear vision, they may lack the resources and capability to implement it. Assess prior to joining where this capability lies within the team. If no obvious choice emerges, prioritize hiring to "get things done" without getting bogged down by concerns about internal optics.
- **Clarify Your Organization's Future Direction:** Understand the future trajectory of your organization and structure your team to support it. If your business is planning to IPO within the next 12 months, for instance, don't delay hiring a Head of Talent Acquisition or a Head of Total Rewards. Compare past organizational performance with the board's goals. Ensure your team is equipped to meet these demands, **as being under-resourced is neither an option nor an excuse**.
- **Invest in Technology:** Ensure your HR tech is fit for purpose and capable of delivering meaningful people data that **"tells the story"** to the C-suite. It's not about advocating for multimillion-dollar spending on a new platform, but about effectively utilizing what you have. **If you lack individuals to manage the HR system, prioritize this hire**.
- **Delegate and Leverage Internal Resources:** One reason CHROs may struggle to make the desired impact is procrastination, often resulting from taking on every aspect of the people agenda. **Avoid getting mired in detail and trying to please an expectant board**. If the internal HR function can't offer support or isn't staffed accordingly, **leverage expertise from elsewhere in the organization**, such as the FPA team for analytical support, the IT team for HRIS data, or investor relations or compliance for incentive and sales plan amendments.

Conclusion:

While perfection may be unattainable, effective, and bold resourcing is often key to success. Compensation, Talent Acquisition, good people data, and well-managed generalist HR provision are essential. Having a meaningful impact in a short period is achievable without drastic changes to existing foundations. Quickly assess skills, understand service gaps, and align your plans with business performance objectives. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss this with you.

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