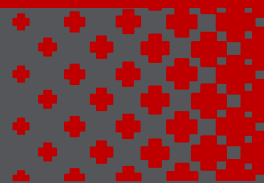




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Kickoff of the CAHRS HRBP Exchange Event

Brad Bell, a professor at Cornell's ILR School and director of CAHRS (Center for Advanced Human Resource Studies), welcomed attendees to the first CAHRS HRBP Exchange.

- **Acknowledgements:** Brad thanked IBM for hosting, noting their support is crucial for making such events possible for a non-profit like CAHRS.
- **Event Purpose:** The event is designed for HR Business Partners (HRBPs) from partner companies to hear the latest thinking, share best practices, and expand their professional networks. A key benefit is building a community for ongoing support.

The Evolving and Complex Role of the HRBP

As the future of work reshapes organizations, the role of the HR Business Partner (HRBP) has become more important than ever. HRBPs today must stay ahead of emerging trends and exhibit a deep understanding of the business or function they support, all while leveraging their HR expertise to configure talent, organizational design, and culture to respond to the current and future needs of the business and its employees.

- **HRBP Responsibilities:** HRBPs are on the front lines, shaping the employee experience and navigating the future of work, including human-technology interaction and organizational change.
- **CAHRS' HRBP Initiative:** Due to the role's complexity, CAHRS initiated a workstream to support the HRBP population. An initial focus group revealed that HRBPs often lack opportunities to connect with peers, unlike specialists in other HR areas.

Introduction to the World-Class HRBP Framework

Kevin Cox, an executive fellow with CAHRS and former CHRO, discussed the motivation behind the new HRBP framework.

- **The Need for an HRBP Community:** Kevin emphasized that the HRBP role is significant in scale but lacks a dedicated community. The goal is to create a space for HRBPs to connect and learn.
- **Participant Motivations:** Multiple participants shared that their companies are transforming the HRBP role from brokering services to leading work on business effectiveness.
- **Framework Goals:** The framework aims to provide role clarity, define what "great" looks like, increase strategic impact, and position the HRBP role as a more viable path to the CHRO position.
- **Framework Development Process:** The work began in October 2024 with a focus group and was validated by CHROs and business leaders, who confirmed the need for HRBPs to be problem-solvers.

The HR Business Partner (HRBP) Value Creation Model

The primary role of an HRBP is to drive business results by understanding, influencing, and operationalizing the business strategy. They should act as business leaders informed by external talent trends.

- **Core Tensions:** A key tension is balancing priorities from central HR with the immediate needs of line leaders. Another is prioritizing between reactive "fire-fighting" and proactive, strategic initiatives.

- **Strategic Levers:** The model proposes three levers for HRBPs to drive business results:
 - **Talent and Leadership:** Focusing on individuals (e.g., succession planning, retention).
 - **Organizational Effectiveness:** Focusing on positions and capabilities (e.g., organizational design, future job roles).
 - **Employee Value Proposition (EVP):** Creating an environment where people are motivated to stay, which includes **Culture** (values and norms) and **Employee Experience** (workplace environment).
- **Capabilities and Context:** The “what” of the job is the model, while the “how” involves underlying capabilities like courage. Context is critical, as priorities depend on the specific business unit’s needs.

Leveraging Hogan Assessments and AI for HRBP Development

- The Hogan assessment can be a valuable self-development tool for HRBPs, addressing the “how” of the job.
- **Introduction to Hogan:** The Hogan Personality Inventory (HPI) shows how an individual appears to others, focusing on work style. The Hogan Development Survey (HDS) identifies “derailers” that emerge under stress. The Motives, Values, Preferences Inventory (MVPI) reveals what motivates a person.
- **Misuses of Hogan:** Assessments should not be “weaponized” to limit opportunities or used to “rationalize” poor behavior.
- **Practical Application:** Hogan can be used for hiring, onboarding, and team integration. Combining scores can create a proxy for complex traits like “courage.”
- **AI Integration:** Large Language Models (LLMs) like Claude Opus can be used to analyze Hogan results for candidates, identifying risks and generating targeted interview questions. This process, using consistent prompts, helps synthesize patterns faster than a human could but requires human judgment.
- **Enhancing Interviews and Development:** Interviews are recorded (with permission) and transcribed to refine assessments. AI is then used to generate specific, actionable development recommendations and even to help candidates formulate questions for hiring managers to assess “fit.”

Breakout Session on Talent and Leadership

- A recent CAHRS CHRO survey identified three key talent priorities: talent development and capability building, workforce planning, and talent segmentation to focus initiatives on critical employee groups.
- The World Economic Forum’s “Future of Jobs Report” projects a net increase in jobs over the next five years, with a growing need for cognitive, interpersonal, and personal skills. A majority of employees will require reskilling.
- Leadership challenges discussed included weak leadership bench strength, poor development for high-potentials, and leader burnout.
- Table discussions focused on sharing talent challenges, including:
 - Attracting and retaining in-demand tech talent where market compensation data lags.
 - The need to elevate the HRBP role by using AI to automate transactional tasks.

IBM's HR Transformation Journey

Michelle Prescott and Teri-Ann Barletti from IBM presented on their AI-driven HR transformation.

- **Evolution of the HR Support Model:** The journey began around 2015-2016 to cut HR costs. Initial chatbot experiments led to “Ask HR,” a unified digital experience. To drive adoption, phone and email support were removed for frontline managers. The platform now handles over 11 million interactions annually, achieving 40% in savings.
- **Current HR Structure:** In early 2026, a new iteration moved some HR partners back into business units, creating a hybrid model. The “Team HR Partner Team” (approx. 180 global HRBPs) serves as the first level of human support for complex cases escalated from “Ask HR.”
- **Upskilling HRBPs:** With technology handling transactional work, the focus shifted to upskilling HRBPs for strategic discussions, coaching, and improving their business acumen.
- **New “Pod Model”:** A new structure organizes HR partners by function (e.g., Performance, Compensation) rather than geography, allowing domain experts to apply their knowledge globally. Senior partners lead squads and mentor junior partners.

AI Integration in IBM's HR Processes

- **AI-Powered Nudges and Coaching:** An AI agent can “nudge” managers via Slack when an employee is underperforming, providing context-specific templates and resources. New tools like “Nadia Coach” and “Coaching via Copilot” are being piloted to help managers role-play and prepare for difficult conversations.
- **Driving Adoption:** Senior leaders are encouraged to demo and role-model the use of new technology to build confidence and drive adoption.
- **Measuring Impact:** Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) include usage of AI tools and a decrease in complex case tickets to HR, indicating that employees and managers are more self-sufficient.
- **Experimenting with AI:** HR teams are encouraged to experiment with AI in a safe environment. One project used AI to analyze data for an organizational redesign, a task that would have otherwise taken months.
- **Practical Use Cases:**
 - **Manager Coaching:** AI customizes talking points for managers based on their specific communication gaps.
 - **Organizational Design:** AI analyzes data to recommend how to organize teams into pods.
 - **Country Nuances:** AI is used to quickly find local legal standards to inform global policies.
- **Governance:** A key challenge is establishing governance for creating AI agents to ensure Return on Investment (ROI) and avoid wasted resources.

Employee Value Proposition, Culture, and Experience

Chris Collins, a Professor in Cornell's ILR School and Director of ILR's MILR program, presented a framework to differentiate between organizational culture and employee experience.

- **Organizational Culture:** Defined as the shared norms, values, and expected behaviors. A strong culture-value alignment is a powerful retention tool.
- **Employee Experience:** The total set of an employee's experiences. An estimated 90% of this is outside HR's direct control [e.g., Information Technologies (IT), facilities]. HR's role is to use data to influence these other functions.

- **A Three-Level Model of Employee Experience:**
 - **Level 1: Episodic Touchpoints:** On-demand interactions (e.g., benefits info), which are heavily automated.
 - **Level 2: Reflection Touchpoints:** Periodic moments when employees evaluate their career growth.
 - **Level 3: Day-to-Day Touchpoints:** Repetitive experiences like commuting and workstation quality, which have a significant cumulative impact.

The HRBP's Role in Improving Employee Experience

- HRBPs should create voice mechanisms (e.g., one-on-one conversations, roundtables) to understand employee pain points, especially for different employee segments (corporate vs. plant).
- This data should be used to push other support functions to make changes and to stop funding programs with low usage.
- **Methods for Gathering Feedback:** A multi-layered approach is best, combining direct conversations, automated real-time feedback (e.g., thumbs up/down on transactions), and AI-driven sentiment analysis of internal communications (e.g., Slack).
- **Future of Sentiment Analysis:** A prediction was made that anonymized sentiment analysis from recorded meetings will become more common, offering more valuable insights than traditional surveys.

Future Event Planning & Ongoing Engagement

- Attendees appreciated the peer-to-peer discussions and real-life examples from other companies and requested that these aspects continue to be emphasized in future CAHRS HRBP Exchanges.
- Topics of interest included AI upskilling for HR, challenges in transitioning to new HR models, and practical application of HR frameworks.
- A CAHRS landing page with an interactive HRBP framework, a beta self-assessment tool, and video clips is now available. Volunteers were sought for focus groups to help build out a competency model in partnership with Hogan.



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