# Do Amazing Things

Things you can do to become a better HR pro in 2010

# About This Book

*Do Amazing Things* is a collection of short, actionable ideas – things you can do in 2010 to become a better HR professional.

This book was created by Chris Ferdinandi of [Renegade HR](#) in partnership with 12 of HR's leading thinkers.

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# Take Action

I know that Human Resource professionals are smart, problem solving business leaders. I know this because I represent 250,000-plus members of the *Society for Human Resource Management*. I see their effectiveness. I see the results of the innovation. I see their organizations succeeding because of their leadership.

Whether they are the "one" in a one person shop in a small organization or one of hundreds in a large multi-national corporation, HR professionals are the folks who make every organization sustainable. Without employees, organizations don't exist. Without the strategic and tactical services and leadership that HR provides, employees aren't recruited, hired, paid, developed or retained. And without employees, organizations don't exist.

Regardless of the size of your organization, the essential role of HR is to ensure that the organization's workforce is sustained and sustainable. This, in my mind, makes HR the most critical function in the organization.

## But here's my concern: we don't act like it.

We wait for validation; we wait for direction; we wait to be invited to the "strategic table." My friends, if there's one thing we can do in 2010 to become better HR professionals, it's to start acting like the critical business leaders that we are.

Stop waiting for validation. Maybe you're certified, maybe you're not. Maybe you've got a degree in HR, maybe you don't. Are you a business person? Have you managed people? Are you recruiting for your organization? Are you training employees? Are you working on

compensation plans? Recommending incentive comp? If you've got any experience at all, you know what you need to do to ensure the organization has the talent it needs.

## Stop Waiting for Direction

You're the expert. Make recommendations. Execute plans. Link your goals to the business plan. Measure your results.

Stop waiting to be invited. You're a business leader. You're a problem solver. You're leading the organization's most important strategy: the people strategy.  As Lon O'Neil, SHRM's CEO, says: "Kick down the door to the meeting room and sit at the head of the table."

Because what you've got is the difference between winning and losing; staying in business and going out of business; taking advantage of the improving economy or being a victim to last year's financial downturn.

You've got the keys to the kingdom because you're HR.  Now start acting like it!

*China Miner Gorman is Chief Global Member Engagement Officer of the [Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM)](#).  With more than 250,000 members in 140 countries, SHRM is the world's largest professional association devoted to human resources.  Follow China on [Twitter](#).*

# Make Better Choices

Make better choices. This sounds too simple and obvious. It is neither. In fact, it is incredibly difficult and challenging.  Let's take a look at why.

While it isn't likely to make me popular for saying so, I believe that too many human resources practitioners working in the field today make business decisions or establish workplace policies with a degree of conservatism that is stifling. It stifles HR's usefulness to the organization, stifles innovation in HR process and practice, and stifles their very careers.

Managers and employees go to HR looking for solutions, and all too often are met with legal disclaimers, and rote decisions based on inflexible policy interpretation.

In these cases, nobody receives a workable solution, and very little is resolved. but the company may be "safer" from lawsuit. No one is measuring the cost of conflict, the intangible loss of productivity, or the morale issues. The weak economy is probably masking your latent yet looming turnover issues.

## Right now is the time for bold decision making!

What I am advocating is that HR practitioners need to stop making decisions based primarily on legal concerns, or enforcement of agencies regulations. We need to choose to stop letting these be the primary driver of human resources practice, and move to making business decisions that will drive results and facilitate organizational success.

I am not suggesting that HR people should abrogate the consideration of legal requirements. Rather, I am saying you fail in your role as an HR professional if you allow your good decision making choices to be overruled by over emphasizing these other areas.

The choice is simple. The choice is yours.

Choose to do the right thing by making good decisions for the right reasons!

*Michael VanDervort is the founder of* [The Human Race Horse Blog](#). *Michael writes and speaks on topics related to human resources and social media. You can follow him on* [Twitter](#).

# Become a Networking Ninja

**This year, network your butt off.**

Networking is one of the best ways to grow professionally – to learn new ideas, become a more well-rounded HR pro, and learn about new opportunities. If you do it right.

Unfortunately, most people think of networking as an exercise in collecting as many business cards as possible.

I want to teach you the right way to network. I want to help you become a networking ninja.

## What's networking really about?

So if networking *isn't* about collecting business cards, what *is* it about?

Networking (the right way) is really a form of informal mentoring. It's about building relationships. It's about helping people and sharing ideas – and occasionally asking others to return the favor.

**Can I learn more about what you do over coffee… my treat?**

Memorize that phrase. That's how some of my most rewarding networking relationships have started.

A conversation over coffee evolved into the occasional, "Hey, can I bounce an idea off you?" And over time, an informal mentor was born.

(*It's not a one way street. Mentoring… err, networking… is two-directional.*)

## Expanding Your Network

Conversations over coffee are great for building a networking locally and inside your organization. But what if you want to expand your network (*trust me, you want to*)?

**In 2010, learn how to really use social media tools.** Sign up for accounts on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#). Learn how to do more with [LinkedIn](#) than just update your profile to include your latest promotion.

Social media turbo-charges networking. Instead of just tossing a business card in your rolodex (*do people still use those?*), connect on your favorite social media channels.

Then, start building relationships. Comment on people's updates. Share useful ideas and information.

And every now and then, ask people if you can bounce an idea off them. Or get their advice. Or help you find a new job.

Don't be afraid to bring social media networking relationships into the "real world." Met someone on Facebook that lives near you? Meet them for coffee!

Networking is one of the best ways to grow professionally. This year, become a networking ninja.

*Chris Ferdinandi is a human resource and social media professional based in Boston, MA. His blog, [Renegade HR](), helps human resource pros become rockstars. You can also connect with him on [Twitter]().*

# Get Out of HR

You want to be great in HR in 2010? Here's my suggestion: **Get out of HR and into other departments.**

Wait. What? This is about being great in HR. How can you be great in HR if you aren't in HR? Just stick with me, it will be worth it.

I've worked with quite a few top performers in many different settings from every possible department. The one thing all of them had in common? They all made their co-workers and cross-departmental colleagues look like rock stars too.

They hit their budgets and made our finance team look like they nailed it. They nailed our marketing messaging and acted like marketing had handed it down from Mt. Zion. And most importantly to me, they accurately forecast their staffing numbers, reduced needless turnover so I could be a more prepared recruiter and had minimal employee relations issues so that I could focus on better issues.

These people were respected throughout the business because they took the time to understand how everything came together and made the effort to be considerate of the organization's needs.

**If you're in HR and want to be great at it, you have to be that rock star every day.**

When your IT group has an issue, you shouldn't have to be given "the talk" or "the head shake." When your marketing department starts talking about ramping up for the holidays,

you know they need an extra person to get the extra distributions out. When your finance department starts talking budgets, you need to be able to talk confidently about what you need and where you can cut.

How are you going to do that? You're going to get out of HR and into your workforce. You're going to spend more time learning about the line of business you support than anyone else.

Thinking about getting a PHR or SPHR? Use that time to learn your organization inside and out and, maybe more importantly, where you interface and can anticipate potential issues, problems and solutions. No test is going to prepare you for that. No course is going to give you that knowledge.

Leave the office and learn more than you ever have about the machine that keeps you employed.

*Lance Haun is VP of Outreach at MeritBuilder and Chief Blogger at [Rehaul](). You can follow him on [Twitter]().*

# Become a Business Leader

In 2009, the recurrent question, "Is HR dying?" rang over and over.

If HR has historically held a "back office support" role in your organization, you can change it to a strategic one in 2010. But you have to really want it. I understand your workload is heavy now, and you have been expected to do more with less in the economic downturn. But you can do it if you're prepared to stretch yourself and make some additional sacrifice.

**Get ready for the ride of your professional life.**

You'll start by becoming involved in the organization's strategic planning. You might balk at this and think it's cliché but get yourself a "seat at every table". You need to entrench yourself in every area of the company.

## Visit your CEO with a plan

Tell her that you recognize that HR needs to be more strategic, you want to step it up and you are prepared and committed to make it happen with her support. Tell her you need to be added to the distribution list for every department's planning meetings.

Compose an email to all department heads saying to add you and send it to her so she can forward it to them – you will get added. Interview the C-level, and plan an objective with each officer within their area of operation. If HR doesn't currently have a piece in the Annual Report, it should. Let the CEO know it needs to and write one.

Act with the authority and influence of a business leader regardless of your title. You have the second most important job in the company after the CEO. You are accountable for the human capital.

## Lose the siloed view of HR being your department

The whole organization is your department. The only other person that can say that is the CEO; it's what you have most in common with each other.

You have a unique view of the company because you touch every part of it and everyone in it. Take your observations, analytical data and ideas for solutions and write proposals for change. Put time on executive calendars and deliver it. Ask for feedback and be persistent.

Do it over and over until you are viewed as a strategic thought leader and missed when you're not at the table. It starts there.

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# Recognize & Represent

As an HR Pro you already know that people are the engines of production in today's economy. You already know that how well they do their job, how well they live the company brand, how well they represent your organization both inside and outside the company walls are critical to how well your company performs.

As an HR Pro you already know what people need to do. Now ask yourself *why* they do it?

That is the one thing HR Pros need to do in 2010 – *focus on why people perform.*

## The Why

Employee survey after employee survey shows that recognition is a key driver of employee engagement, satisfaction and loyalty. Knowing that recognition is such a powerful driver now is the time to stand up and **Recognize and Represent**.

As an HR Pro you set the standard for "people stuff" in your organization. You own that. Show people you know people.

**For 2010 HR Pros should:**

- **Study** – Read, absorb, internalize and know what recognition is and how it is "done."

- **Practice** – Make it your mission in 2010 to practice recognition with your own staff and others in the organization. Remember, deliberate practice is the true path to mastery,

and you need to be the master – the teacher – the recognition sensei in your organization.

- **Teach** – Let's face it you can only do so much. Just as surveys say recognition drives performance, surveys also say that people leave managers, not companies. Managers are the lever for performance and recognition in your organization. Focus on training those managers on how to do recognition.

- **Measure** – Track recognition in your company – who's doing it, who's not.

People are easy – in most cases all they want is to be validated for being an important part of the organization, team, or group. That is the field where recognition plays – it validates their importance.

Unfortunately, recognition isn't a single event – it's an attitude, it's an operating system. Understand that recognition is easy to do once but extremely difficult to do regularly.

In 2010, make it your mission to create a culture of recognition within your organization.

*Paul Hebert writes the blog Incentive Intelligence for his company, I2I, and is a contributing author at Fistful of Talent. When not helping companies align employees with organizational goals he can be found high above Gotham righting the wrongs of motivation in his mask and cape.*

# Treat Every Candidate Like Your Best Customer

Do you like it when your customers are excited about your product or service? Do you value when they tell someone else about their great experience? Absolutely! So why not ensure the same level of satisfaction in job candidates?

Canned email responses thanking someone for their interest aren't good enough anymore. Instead of saying "thanks, we'll let you know (*when we want to*)," invite candidates to join a community of others interested in working for or with you.

When candidates interview on site, they're not cattle. Treat them the way you treat your best customer. Even if you don't hire them, remember, they may be a customer, or the person that influences purchasing decisions, and by creating a good experience, you'll have created a friend, not a foe.

## Learn How to Sell

I cannot stress enough that HR professionals in general lack this key skill. Many go so far as to show disdain for the concept of being a "sales person," feeling it's slimy or beneath them. I urge people to remember if you're receiving a pay check, it's because someone is out there selling products, services, or ideas that fund your employer's existence.

Sales is simply the skill to assess a problem, provide solutions and gain consensus on implementing said solution. As HR pros we have to make sure we understand how to not only diagnose problems, but how to *sell* solutions through trial closes, and conduct the negotiations to arrive at a suitable conclusion.

Why not sign up for sales training today?

## Measure Everything

Since the dawn of HR, there've been constant questions about HR's value. For years the answers we've provided have been vague and have often failed to provide quantifiable data to support our value.

I'm not saying it's easy (if you got into this field hoping it was easy, well…), but it's doable, and worth doing. We record everything, so let's start using that data to show value!

- **Employee Relations** – How much money have you saved the company reducing turn over, and managing out underperformers?

- **Compensation and Benefits** – How have changes in your area affected retention and attraction (surveys are great for getting this data)?

- **Recruiting** – How does the quality of your hires impact bottom line results?

This is not meant to be a complete list, but it's a way to jump start the discussion!

*Jim D'Amico is specialist in developing and implementing best in class recruiting organizations. Follow Jim on Twitter, and connect with him on LinkedIn.*

# HR Needs a Playground

HR needs a playground. Why? Let's look back at 2009...

HR is perceived as a serious function. The current economic crisis forced many HR professionals to become **even more** serious in their work.

RIFs (others and oftentimes their own), re-alignments, brand management – these were just a few of the things that we were tasked with. It wasn't easy, glamorous, or stress-free. It reminded me of firefighters battling wildfires. Oftentimes, the strategy wasn't to put out the fire completely, it was to just contain the damage.

Now it seems that most of the fires within our organization are back to manageable levels. We can take a step back, assess the damage, and start over.

The problem is that after a devastating event most people's thoughts are of minimizing their risk. "*Never again!*" they shout. More controls. More policies and procedures. Fear takes over and creativity, innovation, and risk-taking suffer.

## HR needs a playground.

HR practitioners need an environment where ideas can be shared, worked on, and nurtured. Playgrounds are perfect metaphors for this. One that is well-designed makes it so that participants can utilize the space in a near infinite amount of ways. Playgrounds are also safe without being overly restrictive. As a result, activities can be created on the fly, bonds can be formed with others, and the physical and mental exercise benefits everyone involved.

So what does this have to do with work? For one, forward thinking companies move quickly to recognize and exploit market opportunities, mainly because unnecessary and restrictive internal controls don't exist. This requires a dynamic and flexible workforce. More importantly, the organizational framework (culture, formal/informal networks, supply chain, etc.) has to support employee's creative pursuits (think Google, among others). In other words, creative organizations are structured in similar ways to a playground – the space is flexible, it encourages participation, and you have to use your imagination to overcome challenges.

So for 2010 and beyond HR needs to create and support vibrant environments. We need spaces where creativity, curiosity, collaboration, and innovation is encouraged. Now is a great time to try new things, have fun, and make work better.

## Let's play!

Here are a few links on playgrounds and the importance of creative thinking in business:

- Playground Design and Equipment
- David Rockwell's Imagination Playground
- The Importance of Curiosity
- Quotes on creativity from the book *Exploiting Chaos*
- Tim Brown on Creativity and Play

*Victorio Milian is a HR practitioner, retail veteran, geek, husband and father. He also writes a blog called Creative Chaos Consultant, where he encourages HR professionals to talk, try new things, and be better than they think they are.*

# Talk to Your People

It's been a tough year. People are frustrated. Organizations are hurting. And **we** have the opportunity to change that. The solution is a fairly simple one, but it's going to be difficult.

You have to talk to your people.

We exist in a sort of vacuum much of the time. We see things going on in the organization, but people eventually start to look like letters and numbers on a monitor or sheet of paper. You need to make a personal connection with your staff and help show them that you are interested in their wellbeing.

**But it's time-consuming and the questions are tough to answer.**

I've been there. Sometimes it's hard to find the time to talk with your employees and actually listen to what they have to say. It takes a conscious effort to stop and pay attention. But it's a good idea for many reasons. Staff members will see that you're *actually listening*. There are some amazing solutions that come from your staff if you're willing to seek out answers.

# Dig deep to find out what employees think

I had a supervisor tell me one time that he *didn't want to know* what employees were saying, because he couldn't do anything about it anyway. What kind of leadership is that? I've worked on the other side of that equation where it feels like your managers don't care. It's not fun, and I wouldn't wish it on anyone else.

Whether you want to call it a survey, a poll, or just a chat, get out there and talk to your people.

If they tell you something you can't fix, find something you can. Show them that you really do want to support their efforts. Employees who know that they have the support of their leaders are more likely to become brand champions and spread a positive message about the organization.

*Ben Eubanks is an HR professional and writer with a penchant for leadership, career advice, and zombies. Catch him on UpstartHR or via Twitter.*

# Harness the Power of Collaboration

Most organizations today rely on some kind of employee (and increasingly external) collaboration to deliver services, create and manufacture products, and serve customers both internal and external. Leaders that can effectively understand the amount and nature of these collaborative activities, determine which ones drive the most value to the enterprise, and assess the effectiveness of said collaborative behavior will be critical in 2010 and beyond.

But not all collaboration is the same, not all types of collaboration actually serve to drive the desired outcomes, and not all technologies are the same and can be applied to support or solve collaboration issues.

For the HR professional, the first step in understanding what technologies might be applicable in their unique set of circumstances is a solid understanding of how work actually gets done in the enterprise. How work gets done is typically only partially influenced by the formal organizational structure.

In most organizations there exists an unseen "social network." I don't mean like Facebook (although most of your employees are probably on there and for all you know are interacting regularly there), but rather the set of connections and information flows between individuals and across organizational boundaries that actually reflect the **HOW** of how work gets done.

Assessing these networks and then identifying how to improve their effectiveness (typically through the application of technology) in many ways will differentiate the organization, and help to determine winners and losers in 2010.

In that light, I would recommend starting with two excellent resources for the HR professional that is interested in furthering their knowledge and skills in this area, and that want to bring the latest ideas in enterprise collaboration to bear in their organizations.

## Essential Reading

- [Driving Results Through Social Networks](#) to understand how to define and understand 'hidden' social networks in the enterprise.

- [Enterprise 2.0](#)  for a solid overview of the types of collaboration in the enterprise, and the technologies that can be applied.

Once you get though these two resources, you should have the tools to begin assessing collaboration inside your organization, be able to recommend strategies for the improvement of enterprise collaboration, and have the basic understanding needed to choose and implement the correct technology to support your strategy.

Good Luck!

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# Focus on Feedback

The need for regular feedback and coaching at work has never been more strongly felt.

Office demographics will shift dramatically over the next decade as Gen Yers flood entry-level positions. This is one of the largest cohorts to enter the workforce — "60 million strong" according to BusinessWeek. Boomers will continue to retire, opening space for Gen Xers to move into senior management and assume responsibility for junior staff they have great difficulty relating to.

Gen Y is the "feedback generation," recently graduated from an environment in which they were constantly evaluated, and most at home with video games and the immediacy of Google. Gen Y is very different from their predecessors, creating a culture chasm between them and their Gen X managers.

Feedback and coaching will play essential roles in bridging this gap.

# The Need for Feedback

Feedback is a critical component in motivating and developing employees, and is essential for attracting and retaining high performers. Organizations that don't foster feedback-centric cultures will ultimately fail.

High performers understand this intuitively. An eagerness to constantly *do better* is one of the character traits that defines a high performer. Feedback and coaching are the fuels that drive that need, pushing everyone on your team to execute at a higher level.

They also play an essential role in learning and development. **A small change in behavior will often lead to a big improvement in performance.**

Employees in a feedback-centric culture can easily uncover *blind spots* and understand how to address them. Regular feedback and coaching enable them to make small course corrections instead of being overwhelmed with massive, infrequent shifts.

Part of this challenge will be keeping Gen Yers engaged.

Engagement can have a significant impact on your bottom line (in addition to the well-known attraction and retention issues documented elsewhere). According to David MacLeod, adviser to the U.K.'s Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, "If employer actions raise engagement by just ten percent, they could typically increase profits by up to £1,500 per employee per year." Feedback solves this too, providing a channel for Gen Yers to connect with colleagues, understand challenges, and develop necessary skills to advance their careers.

Bridging the Gen Y culture chasm is quickly becoming a top challenge regardless of your industry. HR pros should make feedback-centric culture their top priority for 2010, laying an early foundation for the generation-spanning bridges they'll need to build over the next decade.

*Nathaniel Rottenberg is part of the marketing and community team at Rypple. Nathaniel joins us straight from Queens University where he graduated with BAH in philosophy. Follow him on Twitter.*

# Online Outreach

**What is the one thing someone can do in 2010 to become a better HR pro?**

That is the million dollar question. And, while each of us is different in our strengths, I think I can find some commonality that we can work from. My initial thoughts were to talk about finance, internal communications, or even HR technology. But, when I look at the method that would best help an HR pro to excel more in **all** of these areas, it is **online outreach**.

First, in terms of your own personal development, there will be huge rewards if you dedicate a few minutes each day to connecting with other HR professionals online.

Whether you are comfortable using venues such as SHRM Connect, Facebook, LinkedIn, or Twitter, the point is to reach out as much as possible. As you do, you will find opportunities to discuss HR topics, debate, share, and learn. This will make you better because you'll be articulating your views on human resources and it will help you improve your listening skills as you learn from different people outside your day-to-day HR group.

Next, in terms of developing other HR pros, online outreach is a great way to bring other HR professionals into the online HR community.

Once you make your personal connections in the online HR community, reach out to HR pros you know who are not involved online and find creative ways to get them involved. This may lead you to you teach someone how to use Twitter or another social media site. Maybe this means you will share articles you find online via your Google Reader and you can help set someone else up with a reader.

By focusing time on online outreach, you will not only develop yourself, you will develop others and have a great sense of accomplishment for doing both. And, in the end, you'll be a better HR pro and your colleagues will too.

*Trish McFarlane is a Regional HR Director in an agency environment with 15 years experience. She is an HR blogger and speaker on human resources and social media. You can find her at HR Ringleader or on Twitter.*

# Make HR the Coolest Thing Ever

I'm of the belief that perception is reality.

Just think about what happens when someone says, "This is the **COOLEST** thing ever!" Doesn't a declaration like that make you stop and take notice? And it's a statement like that that often serves as a starting point for wanting to learn more about said cool thing and forming your own personal opinion. It seems there's something extremely powerful about other people's perceptions and the influence it yields over our own reality, isn't there?

**Translate this into our world as HR pros.**

Sure, you have a brilliant HR team who creates and manages really great people programs. But is that everyone else's reality? Have others taken notice of your team's greatness?

If we keep in mind that perception is reality, then what's needed is for someone else to say, "They are the smartest HR people, ever." Or, maybe it's that someone says, "That company has the coolest employee benefits!" These are the kinds of declarations you want to have made – by other people that is.

And your role? It's to get the conversation going to start carving out the perception/reality of your team's greatness and awesome people programs.

**Start off by talking about yourself and the great things you're doing.**

Maybe it's on a blog or through social media. From there, try helping a reporter out and share your thoughts on workplace trends. Talk about how you're helping the workforce to manage stress in this economy.

Share interview tips with job seekers that will help propel their careers to the next level. Talk about all the great things you've done and know – but talk about it outside of the four walls of your office. Take it to the masses and get them talking. And I promise if you do that, it will come full circle and back to folks talking within your organization about the "coolest thing ever."

**But of course, you have to have the goods to back it up.** You've got to be the smartest HR pro. You've got to create and implement really great people programs. You have to walk the talk.

Everyone takes notice when someone says, "This is the **COOLEST** thing ever." So let's get the conversation started.

*Jessica Lee is a DC-based HR and recruiting professional for the global public relations firm, APCO Worldwide and also serves as editor of the talent management blog Fistful of Talent. If you want to know how to create a buzz about the good work you're doing, you can follow her lead. Glamour Magazine, the New York Post and Mashable reporters have all turned to Jessica for her insights into workplace issues.*

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