

HRYP Guide

Tips and advice for young HR
professionals

Ben Eubanks

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Dedication

This book is dedicated to my wonderful wife, Melanie, and to my new baby girls, Isabella and Maybree. You ladies make my world go 'round.

I'd also like to say a quick "thank you" to the people who believed in me enough to give me support through the years. The manager who challenged me, the friend who mentored me, and the countless others who gave me the push I needed at just the right time. I appreciate you so much.



About Me

My name is Ben Eubanks and I am... Well, I'm a lot of things. My day job is a generalist role with a government contractor in Huntsville, AL. When I get off work, I have a few things that take up my time, whether it's volunteering with my local SHRM chapter as the Social Media Director or writing my blog about [human resources and leadership](#). I'm the 2010-2011 Chairman of the SHRM YP Committee. I cofounded an unconference event called [HRevolution](#). I've written a handful of eBooks. Told you I did a lot! In my spare time I write, read, volunteer, and play with my kids. Want to connect? I'm on [Twitter](#), [LinkedIn](#), and you can always hit me [via email](#).

What the heck is an HRYP?

HRYP stands for "human resources young professional." Yeah, sounds like a mouthful, so HRYP is the easiest way to say it, 'kay? :-). HRYP is an initiative kicked off by SHRM's go-to guy for everything on the "young professional" end of the spectrum--Chuck Salvetti.

I had the pleasure of meeting Chuck at [SHRM10](#), and since then I've learned more about what they are doing for young professionals in the HR space. I have to say... I love it. [My goal from the very beginning](#) was to serve as a resource for those just getting started in human resources, and the HRYP initiative is something that closely aligns with my own goals. In short, I'm *pumped*.

With that in mind, I have built a series that links together the strengths and knowledge of some of my trusted resources in the HR industry and the questions/needs of the HRYP community. I am an active participant in the [HRYP group on LinkedIn](#), and I encourage other young HR pros to join (I'm also a fan of the [HRYP Facebook group](#), but I don't participate there as much). I have had some interesting discussions with the people there, and I am excited to share some helpful information with non-HRYPs related to those conversations.

If you know someone who's considering HR or is new to the profession, I would greatly appreciate it if you could pass this guide along to them. It would mean a lot to me, and I know they would appreciate it as well. Thanks!

I'm going to get into the good stuff, but I thought I would end the intro with this quote. It's quite fitting.

Every age fraught with discord and danger seems to spawn a leader. -Dan Simmons

The top 3 concerns of young professionals

I started researching the problems and issues faced by young HR professionals, and three recurring themes kept appearing.

- **Lack of credibility**
- **Lack of challenging work**
- **Lack of a definite career path**

I uncovered these issues by asking the following questions to the HRYP LinkedIn group.

1. If you could talk with a handful of HR professionals on the Director/VP level, what would you ask/tell them?
2. What is one frustration you have as an HRYP?
3. If there was an ideal outcome to that frustrating issue, what would it be?

Below you'll find a few responses to those questions by the HRYPs out there. If you're working near one, you might want to take notes for later (heck, you could even ask them yourself!). ☺

Samantha

1. I would want to ask each of them how they chose HR as a career and what path did he or she take to become a Director/VP (career and personal)
2. I can only say one?!?!? I think the main frustration that I have now is how HRYP are viewed. Despite how hard we work or show our credibility, I feel that some HR professionals don't take HRYPs seriously and/or want to keep them at a certain level regardless of performance because "that's how it's always been done". Some times I believe there is some reverse age discrimination going on.
3. An ideal outcome would be for everyone (all HR professionals young and seasoned) to have open minds and work together and share ideas as colleagues.

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Not worrying about how old someone is or what someone should or shouldn't know.

Pamela

1. I would love to know what they were thinking at my age. More specifically, did they have a 'plan' for the direction of their career or were they simply stumbling along and eventually realized where they'd like to go.
2. As a fellow HRYP, my ultimate frustration is exactly what Samantha mentioned. Sometimes it is very difficult to be taken seriously by department co-workers as well as other co-workers. Unfortunately, even though my resume demonstrates my proven abilities over the last 4 years, I am still looked at as a 'newbie' in HR. My city is in a smaller market and I am confident that I am the youngest HR Professional in this area. When I attend local SHRM meetings, I feel obligated to stay quiet through the meeting.
3. My ideal outcome would be to allow all members of HR to speak and voice their opinion. There are a few different generations working together in my department. The department should take advantage of each of the strong characteristics of each generation. No one should be made to feel less superior because of something they clearly cannot change.

Jenilee

1. I would love to know what they wish they knew when they were starting out in HR, and what pitfalls they would avoid.
2. As an HRYP, employee relations can be challenging when some employees with long tenures don't think an HRYP is equipped to deal with the situation.
3. Ideally, in this situation a more senior HR person would partner with the HRYP, while at the same time trying to give as much primary responsibility as possible. If this is not possible, then you just have to do your best and make sure you're prepared. HOWEVER, at the same time I realize that HR is seen as a very

experience-driven field (I think because there are always "firsts" and unpredictable situations). So, I also have to remind myself that it's ok if I have to wait for some time before ALL employees, junior and senior, are comfortable.

Colleen

1. I would love to ask them how they got started in HR, was it just by chance that they were placed there or did they choose to be in HR.
2. I think one frustration of mine is proving myself to more tenured HR professionals that I can actually do the job. It's hard being so young in this profession because you wind up being an HR assistant for years before you are promoted into a more junior role.
3. My ideal outcome would be to have a career path laid out for me when I start a job, so I know that I am not going to be stuck in a lower level HR position forever.

These are but a few of the responses to the discussion, but they all hit on those same underlying themes of credibility, challenge, and career path.

How to gain credibility (when you have none)

Credibility. Some of us have it, and some of us don't. How can you build and maintain it? If you've lost it as a result of a dishonest action or some other similar factor, then that's one thing, but it's a whole other issue when you are starting from scratch. How can you establish credibility when you have none to begin with?

My thoughts

I get it. You have to build credibility over time by completing the work (and doing it well!) that is assigned to you. Well, what if you've mastered your work but your manager won't let you do anything that requires more responsibility? I suggest carving out time each week (even as little as 30 minutes can make a difference) to work on things that stretch you and help you develop within your career. While it may not affect (or be appreciated in) your current job, it should be something valuable that can be used at some point in your career.

Three ideas for building credibility

- Try to spend more time with the people who need to see your work to evaluate your credibility. If you truly are, then it *will* shine through.
- Do little things like showing appreciation for the efforts of others and informally mentoring new people. It helps you to build a base of people who will vouch for you.
- Take responsibility for problems and solve them. This opens more doors than you ever would have imagined.

From the top: six people on my "credible" list speak out

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- Problem: Lack of credibility
- Question: How can a new HR pro establish credibility?



Credibility is so essential to being able to get a job done and to have any degree of influence or impact on decisions or change. For a new HR pro to establish credibility, it starts with, for me, *doing what you say you are going to do*. It continues on to saying, "I don't know but I'll research that for you" when you are asked a question you don't know the answer to and not making answers up or guessing on the fly. It means even if you think you know the answer, you keep researching until you are sure. Then, owning your advice and recommendations - if you missed something, if you advised improperly, if you made a mistake - own up to it and be prepared to articulate what you can and will do to correct it this time and to ensure it doesn't happen again. *Credibility means being consistent with your opinions and values* and not tailoring them to suit a particular situation to gain an advantage, to not rock the boat or to be liked. It means being professional and not joining the office grapevine.

HR is not rocket science. *I can deal with mistakes but once I can't/won't deal with credibility issues for long.*

Lisa Rosendahl [blog-@lisarosendahl](#)



Become so knowledgeable that people seek **you** out. Getting certified helps! Never stop learning!

Become a true resource for your company. Even if someone asks you a question and you don't know the answer, get back to them in a timely manner and *give them additional information they may find helpful* as

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well. Become knowledgeable about your company and HR's role in it. Know how can you best help and meet the needs of the company and employees.

Keep up to date on new laws coming out, become knowledgeable of what the company you work for does and how you can make them more successful from your position: save the company money, train their workforce, anything to stay competitive, etc.

Stephanie Walsh-[LinkedIn-@thewitchinghr](#)



Starting out in HR is like starting out in any other function: you have no track record. It doesn't matter if you're just out of school or changing careers. What you need to do quickly is *establish a track record of effectiveness* that includes being focused on learning and committing to the team.

Above all, you must begin to *produce results*. Whether you're coming in ahead of time on projects or doing your work right the first time, what you want to establish is the reputation of being able to do whatever is asked of you quickly and thoroughly, with no drama. In short: become the dependable, [go-to person](#) in your department or organization. Your age, gender, or other perceived limiters will disappear. You'll be sought out for your ability to deliver results. *That's credibility.*

China Gorman-[blog-@chinagorman](#)

Credibility takes time to build and seconds to destroy. One thing that we will all do is make mistakes. Generally speaking, people want to blame others for their mistakes. In a lot of cases, that may be right.

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However, credibility can come by *excelling in the face of challenges*. Be willing to accept your mistakes and learn from them but not only that—take responsibility for making it right. In other words, tell your customer (clients, team, etc...) what went wrong and what steps you are taking to fix the problem **and** what steps you are taking to make sure that it doesn't happen again. Generally speaking, *people don't expect perfection. But most people (hopefully all) respect honesty and integrity*. Those two things are the foundation of credibility.

Rusty Brand-[LinkedIn](#)-2010 NASHRM Chapter President



I've never really had much of an issue with credibility. To me, it's always been about three key points. *Be straightforward, honest, and consistent*. There are ways to get things done even when you don't (yet) have the credibility you need. When trying to push something forward, garner support from multiple stakeholders, build momentum, and even if you didn't have the credibility/authority to drive the process from the beginning, you'll be looped back into the process when it comes time to make it happen.

Allen Robinson-[blog](#)-[@logicwriter](#)



I don't know who said this but it has been out there for a long time. The quote is this: *Leaders lead*. If you want to be an HR pro, I think you need to have leadership qualities and you have to lead, So one thing I think I think a newbie to HR should do to establish credibility is to *seek*

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out, find, follow and pounce on any and all leadership opportunities that come their way.

These opportunities can come in many different forms or shapes. Here are some that might be available to a young HR pro:

- A leadership capacity in your place of worship
- PTA
- Neighborhood association
- College/High School Fraternity/Sorority Alumni Association
- Volunteer committee at work (United Way, Safety, Project, Holiday party)
- Car Club
- Local Not for Profit Agency or Board (like a local SHRM chapter)
- Local/Regional Charity event
- Youth Sports League

This is a short and simple list of some potential leadership opportunities. Often times with these types of groups there is a dearth of involvement, let alone leadership. *So this will give you an opportunity to shine without having to be highly skilled, experienced leader.* Furthermore, with some of these groups you will get opportunities that you might not otherwise get at work.

[Certification](#) is another way that a young HR Pro can establish credibility. Receiving your [PHR certification](#) will demonstrate to everyone in the community that you know your stuff and are serious about what you are doing.

Credibility can also be established by *doing the right things everyday*. If the young HR Pro always dresses properly (whatever that may be for the organization), gives their superiors more than they ask for, carries a positive outlook and always has an upbeat

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word for all, then this will tell the world a great deal about them. This list is not all inclusive but my point is this; do the right things every day and make sure that everyone knows that you are doing this. Keep a high profile within the organization.

Dave Ryan-[blog-@davethehrczar](#)

Stop and think.

Do you have something to add? How did you start building credibility from scratch?
How much of a role does credibility play in someone's career?

How to find (or create) meaningful work

I've talked before about [meaningful and purposeful work](#). We all want to know that our work is more than just another hour wasted like a rat in a wheel. But how can we find (or make) meaningful work for ourselves?

My Thoughts

I think one of the biggest things that can set you apart as a professional is to have some enthusiasm and passion for what you do. You can know all the legal stuff, be able to coach a manager, and document an investigation flawlessly, but if you don't have a positive attitude, people won't want to be around you.

Smile, darn it! Act like you're glad to be there. You might be surprised to see what happens if you do that often enough. And if you just hate your job and can't stand it day in and day out, then please (*please!*) get out. You're making the rest of us feel horrible too with your [lack of friendliness](#). This topic of passion at work is something I feel... Um, *passionate* about.

From the top: six people I respect give their thoughts



Be credible, pay your dues with a smile, be willing to do what needs to be done to get the job done, and see beyond the job right in front of you to anticipate what can be done. There is a lot going on in an HR Department and as the manager and supervisor, I can't be everywhere and can't oversee everything. I need people working with me who I can count on to get the figure out how to get the job done, to solve problems when they arise and to work nice with others. So a new HR pro thinks they are just paying their dues - which they

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are - but there is much more to it than that. I am looking for how the work is being done and looking for performance that I can trust. Once I see that, the less routine, more challenging work will come your way until you cry uncle.

My military experience and education opened the door for me initially however developing solid relationships, being true to my word and always learning have been keys to my continued success. I have been fortunate to work for people who have provided me with the opportunities to learn, to contribute and, of course, to make mistakes. You don't have to join the Army to be successful in HR, but having an open mind, a willingness to understand issues from another's perspective and strong critical thinking skills will separate you from the masses.

Lisa Rosendahl-[blog-@lisarosendahl](http://lisarosendahl.com)



- Find a good mentor or manager at work that will put you on new projects or act as your “agent.”
- Be aggressive in asking for new assignments, positions, projects
- Use every advantage to get in front of people and speak

When I first started out in HR I was a lowly clerk that handled data entry and pushed paper all day. I knew I was destined for more. In less than 9 months I had been promoted to a recruiter. How did this happen? *I made it a point to come in early and work a little late, I asked a lot of questions not only about HR work but about the business and products we were producing, and built relationships with the management/employees/and corporate HR employees.*

I was lucky to be given a new manager who wanted to mentor me and when I did a good

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job he put me on tougher assignments. But my co-workers heard and noticed too. And, good or bad, they would suggest me for tasks.

At one point I was told I was going to present a supervisor training class over lunch. It was my first one ever and I was terrified. Not only of the public speaking but because I had no background on the topic- but that's another story. Needless to say I came off as stiff and boring, and people kept falling asleep during my presentation. Later, at the same company, I received a new manager who pushed me to continue speaking in front of people and gave me good advice – ditch the PowerPoint, use stories, and make it interactive. Not only did it make it more fun for me but it helped my audience remember the information better. Plus, I realized speaking well in front of a group is a powerful thing. People remembered me and came to me for advice and help.

One day I heard that the company was going to open 2 new facilities and I knew that one of the HR managers that I really wanted to work with was going to transfer there. I went to him and said “I want to help you set up the office. You know I’ll do a good job for you.” Strangely it worked. But what surprised me more was that when I told my co-workers I got the transfer they weren’t surprised – they said they all knew it was going to be me, that I was the best fit for that job.

My new manager was fantastic- a good mentor and friend. He pushed me to do supervisor training, get out into the community, get involved, and get to know people. And when an opportunity came up to travel to Maine to help out the facility there, he came to me first and asked me if I’d be interested in going – Knowing I would be. But I also expressed my interest in going to his boss, the HR V.P. I ended up going for almost 2 months. They even offered me an HR Administrator position up there!

Stephanie Walsh-[LinkedIn-@thewitchinghr](#)



Do not underestimate the power of paying your dues.

Once you've established yourself as the dependable, go-to-person for your team, you'll be given more and more "other duties as assigned" that will enable you to learn more and contribute more. Remember, it's not about you; it's about the work of your department and ultimately the success of the organization. Look for ways to do new things that will allow you to contribute more while you're learning. But always pay attention to your job duties and do them flawlessly, cheerfully and dependably. You may be surprised how quickly your job duties will be redefined to include more impactful activities.

China Gorman-[blog-@chinagorman](http://chinagorman.com)



It's the age old dilemma....**I don't have enough experience to get the job that will give me the experience that I need to get the job.** We've all been there or are there now. Here are a couple of thoughts:

1. Think about your job in a different way. If you are in a role that you are "paying your dues", make sure that you fully understand the role and how it fits into your organization. Get above the tasks that you do and think high level questions such as "how does what I do effect the business of my company" "is it an efficient process" "what are common questions/issues that arise within this role and how can we address those differently". While you may be "paying your dues", demonstrating creative thinking to your leadership team and being able to tie ideas or solutions back to improving the business of your company will make you stand out among your peers but will also provide that sense of meaningful work.

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2. Make sure that you are learning from your experiences. Some people have several years of experience but it is the same thing over and over. In other words, they have been working for 25 years but it as if they have 1-year of experience, 25-times. Don't be that guy! Learn from what you are doing---even if it is not your dream job. Understand the good points, the frustrations experienced by the people doing it, how processes work (backwards and forwards) and how it fits into the overall strategy of your organization (I think I've said that already...get the point?). Prepare yourself for opportunities now or the opportunities in the future will be limited.

Rusty Brand-[LinkedIn](#)-2010 NASHRM Chapter President



Complete tasks quickly that you don't find meaningful and devote time to projects that give you satisfaction and a feeling of purpose. I get a lot of satisfaction out of a small portion of my work duties, so I try to finish up what I can and spend my remaining time performing work that is meaningful to me and has long-term benefits for my employer.

Allen Robinson-[blog](#)-[@logicwriter](#)



When it comes to this I have some generational issues here. While the perception may be that the new/younger folks get all of the less desirable work, such may in fact be the case. But if not for the new or younger people who is going to does the grunt work? While it may seem mundane and rudimentary nonetheless all of it is still essential. Were it not, the work would not be done. Completing I-9s may seem like it is not cool, but it is pretty damn important when it is all said and done. If they are not done properly with great deal of attention paid to detail this can expose the

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employer to a tremendous liability. So while the young HR pro needs to think through the matter and decide if it is really as bad as they think it is.

Now the flip side to this is that if the young HR pro feels that not only are they not being included in the cool stuff, but rather they are being EXCLUDED, i.e. someone is taking a positive action to ensure that they are NOT being given any chance to do any meaningful work; this becomes a different matter. If that is the case I think it is incumbent upon the young HR pro to have a conversation with the superior about the matter, as uncomfortable as that may be.

Somewhat relating Q2 to Q1, if you can't find meaningful work in your job, maybe you can find it in some other areas outside of work. For example as a volunteer leader in a not-for-profit group, you might well find rewarding and fulfilling work.

Last comment about this matter, whatever you do DON'T GO NEGATIVE. If you turn sour, and start making negative comments to anyone about this, you will have fallen on your sword. *There is more than enough negativity in the workplace already - don't bring more!*

Dave Ryan-[blog-@davethehrczar](#)

Stop and think

Do you have something to add? How do you find meaning in your work, and if you can't do that, how can you create an environment where work can be meaningful and fulfilling? Are people who don't find meaning in their work doomed to live a sad, sad life? :-)

Getting into HR and finding a career path

How can I get into HR? That question has been asked untold numbers of times, and the answer isn't always an easy one. And then there's the sticky issue of trying to figure out what's next when you finally *do* get into one of those highly coveted and treasured positions in the human resources field. :-) Let's see if we can shed some light on those issues today.

How I got into HR

My story isn't the one that you normally hear. So many people I've met and interviewed over the years ended up "falling into" the HR profession through a growing admin role or by taking a slot nobody else wanted. Not me. I've always been around "people" problems. My parents own a small business, and I always saw the issues they had with hiring, retaining, and compensating their employees.

I knew there had to be a way to solve those issues, so I planned to get my degree in business management. Well, luckily for me, my favorite professor from my college years (Jim Kerner) assigned me a paper where I had to write about this thing called "human resources management." In my research, I realized that *this was what I'd always been looking for*. I couldn't believe there was actually an entire profession devoted to the issues I wanted to confront, and I decided then and there that HR was the career for me.

Once I graduated, I had to stay at my employer for a year since they helped to pay for my final semester of college. I was itching to find an HR role, and I was worried I'd forget everything I learned in college. So in January of 2009, I took and passed the PHR exam. When my year of indentured servitude was up with my employer (around February 2009), I started combing the career sites out there looking for an entry level HR gig. I found one with a local nonprofit organization, applied, and took on my first role in an HR capacity in April of 2009.

What's next (HR career path)

I've spent a lot of time writing posts and recording videos to address this specific issue of advancing beyond the entry level human resources role. While I haven't made it too far along myself, I have asked a lot of people for their thoughts and opinions, and you'll find those below. First, here's what I have to say on the issue:

- [Rules for new HR professionals](#)
- [How to move up in HR](#)
- [Ways entry level HR pros can be more relevant](#)
- [Lessons from one year in my HR career](#)

Thoughts from people who've been there, done that, and got the t-shirt



I didn't choose HR – initially. I was leaving the military and interviewing with a paper manufacturer for a supply management position. After the interviews, the team asked me if I had ever considered Human Resources. At the time, and it was not that long ago, my perception of HR was a very administrative (and boring) department that processed pay actions.

HR was definitely not the field for me. They offered me the opportunity to spend some time with an HR department at one of the paper mills to see it in action. Sure, there was some processing of personnel actions and benefits work being done, but there were also employee relations, labor relations, staff development, recruitment and coaching actions going on. It was a pretty dynamic department.

I took the job and haven't looked back since. I am the Human Resource Director for a medical center of over 1400 employees and no, this was not my intention from the beginning - I grew into the position starting with the paper manufacturer, moving to an

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HR Department of 1 (eventually growing to 3!) for a privately held manufacturing company and then to my current position.

Lisa Rosendahl-[blog-@lisarosendahl](#)



I always knew I wanted to work in Business Administration but was unfamiliar with HR when I entered college. It wasn't until my senior year of college that I settled on HR and joined the student chapter of [NASHRM](#). My interest was piqued during a project that involved splitting our HR class into the Union and Management sides and trying to settle a labor dispute.

Once I learned about strikes, laws, and negotiations I was hooked. Only later did I figure out that HR is more than that. I really thought I would be arguing for a living and briefly considered a legal profession but this is where I ended up. I have reached the HR Director level but it was not my goal, nor is it to become a VP. *I just want to be able to do my job well.* The higher up you go the more stress you entail and I've decided I just don't want that stress. I'd also like to change and focus more on training and development or look into other positions in the company – Operations for example.

Stephanie Walsh-[LinkedIn-@thewitchinghr](#)



I, like many in my generation, fell into HR by accident. I took a year off between my sophomore and junior years of college to work in a non-profit publishing organization – in the magazine editorial division. I thought my career path was going to be the writing/editing side of the publishing business and thought this entry level “Manuscript Typist” role would be my foot in the door. I fully intended to finish my degree at night and start moving into the publishing world at that time. You can't believe how boring the job was. I typed handwritten manuscripts (this was 32 years ago: pre-word processing!)

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so that the editors could edit them. I was part of a pool of women. I was 19; the others were various ages from 23 to 65, all female.

I quickly determined that my plan had several flaws. But I had committed myself to this path and I was going to see it through. But to say the work was boring missed the truth of it by a mile. I'd have all my work finished by 11:00 or so and then I'd go hunting for something to do. I suggested to the supervisor that I be trained so that I could back up others in the department when they went on vacation and we made that happen. So, after about 3 weeks on the job, I essentially started to rotate through every other administrative and entry level professional job in the department. Within 6 months, I could and had done every job – and had done it well – that wasn't a supervisory job or an editing job. I figured quickly that to go back to college and finish my degree ASAP was perhaps the better plan, and I returned to school in the spring.

Fast forward another year and a half and the “personnel department” of that organization hunted me down to see if I would join them upon my graduation. *I had established myself as a hardworking, team oriented producer.* And so, without another offer, I accepted. My thought was that by working in personnel I'd learn about organizations and their jobs and be able to decide on my direction. Turned out I really enjoyed the HR work. I headed up a robust summer intern program, backfilled for the recruiters, and generally *[made myself indispensable](#)*.

After almost 3 years I applied for a vacant recruiter position. I was 24. I had basically done the job already. But my manager told me that the hiring managers in the rest of the organization saw me as an administrative employee, not a professional employee, and that if I really wanted to progress in HR I should join another organization in a professional position and then come back once I had established myself. Tough advice. Unfair advice. Totally true advice. So I did. I was gone in 4 months. But I never went back – and I never went back to HR as a practitioner. I went to the consulting world and began a career of running consulting/service businesses in the HR space.

China Gorman-blog-@chinagorman



"Hi, I'm Steve and I'm in HR..." "Hi, Steve!" (slight groan)"

Too often HR people sound like they're in a 12-step program when they state that they are in Human Resources. That should be discouraging, but I find it to be a great driver! You see, I'm one of those rarities in HR. I chose to be in HR intentionally and it has been the only field I've ever been in! I didn't fall into it at all. Actually, HR found me.

When I was going to college (the fabulous Ohio University) in the early 80's, there wasn't a Human Resources program. In fact, the only class you could take was on Labor Relations. I was struggling trying to fit in as an Engineer and then a Chemist when I first started. One day on break at home I was talking to my parents and they made me see that I had a huge blind spot! My mom said, "Steve, do you notice that you're always around people? You tend to do things with people all the time and you tend to also gather people together. Is there a major that focuses on people that you could go into?" I ended up in Interpersonal Communications and things took off!

My first gig was for a Fortune 100 company where I was an in-house recruiter for a group of client groups throughout the corporate offices. I loved placing folks in jobs and thought that I was heading down the right path. That's when the issue of Company Culture smacked me right between the eyes! You see, you're only allowed to do certain tasks in a large company. Things are very compartmentalized. I wanted to be more of a generalist, but that wasn't allowed. Also, they wanted me to go into Manufacturing and I wanted nothing to do with that. I was young and naïve, so I left to pursue the world of an HR Generalist with very little experience.

Irony now steps in... My next 10 years of HR were in Manufacturing and they were phenomenal years! I got to practice HR from a grass roots level with people who were

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VERY human. *I realized that I needed to be in a culture where I could affect other's lives and they could affect mine.* I learned the value of practicing HR and being consistent with employees. *I spent much more time with the employees than I did with Management or my desk.* I was encouraged to do so and I have only benefited from that.

After manufacturing, I entered the world of consulting engineering and architecture as an HR Manager. During this time of my career, I began to develop and realize the power of networking within the greater HR community. I held a “semi-senior” role in the company and they encouraged me to get connected to the industry. At that time I became our local SHRM chapter President, began facilitating our monthly HR Roundtable (which I've been at for 12 years now), started developing and giving presentations to State Conferences and local chapters/businesses, joined the State Conference Committee and started the HR Net (an internet message board for HR professionals that goes out to over 5,700 folks worldwide each week). *Note from Ben: if you're interested in the HR Net, leave a comment below and I'll make sure Steve gets you the free signup info.*

I began to realize that I was a *businessperson who practiced HR* and changed my focus on how HR should be practiced. I began my career with the basics of recruiting, compliance and administration like most HR people. Now I was at a place where I wanted to be a Senior Executive of a company to influence the direction and strategy of HR in order for the business to be successful. I actually grew out of my role at the consulting firm. I never thought that would ever happen in my career.

And now, I'm the Executive Director of HR for a regional pizzeria company that is a Cincinnati tradition. All of the experiences I have gathered along the way have made me a more well-rounded human and I am more excited about being in HR now than when I started.

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The great thing about our profession is that it does evolve. As long as there are humans at work, there will always be HR. It won't look the same as it does even today and that is fantastic! We have a chance to define the future of workplaces, the direction of employee development and leverage the power of Social Media to provide great opportunities for people of any industry.

So... I'm Steve and I *LOVE* being in HR! It rocks and I wouldn't trade it for any profession in the world!

Steve Browne-[blog-@sbrowneh](#)



Don't fall into repetitive roles. The whole issue of HR having undefined job titles makes it tough, so make sure you're getting the experiences you want/need instead of reaching for a specific title. Each and every experience helps in the long road upward, so make sure you're doing things that help you to grow and develop instead of doing the same thing over and over again. Take opportunities to boost your experience level even if it only makes up a small portion of the overall job you're doing.

Allen Robinson-[blog-@logicwriter](#)



How did I end up in Human Resources? Was it a planned career choice? The short answer is no. It does remind me of a story. I was attending a SHRM Leadership Conference a number of years ago. The speaker said that they talked to a lot of kids in school and had yet to hear any child say, "When I grow up, I want to be a compensation and benefits manager for a Fortune 500 Company."

Now having said that, when I got into HR/Personnel (1990) I do not honestly think there was the professionalism that there is in the field today.

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Fortunately, I think this is changing. I have had the opportunity to talk to numerous college classes and I am happy to report that I do hear many students say they want to work in Human Resources. That is heartening. *It tells me the work has become viewed with a higher degree of professionalism* and is revered and respected by some, if not all, CEOs.

While I do hold the title of "director," this was not necessarily where I was headed some 20 years ago when I got into this work. The company I work for has grown over the years and fortunately I been able to grow with them. I like to think that my growth has contributed to the overall growth of the company.

Young HR pros should immerse themselves in their work, their field and the people that they meet. Do not fear failure. Failure is a natural part of growth and development. Network with as many people as possible, if not for your career; do it as a way to develop your personal and professional network. Important friendships and relationship can be developed and nurtured in many different ways. For example, it might seem unlike that young man who works in HR in Alabama (*Note from Ben: he's talking about me, folks :-)*) could have a friend and HR colleague who is twice his age located 600 miles away in Central Illinois. How do relationships like this occur? It is not by happenstance. An HR pro works hard to meet people, make new friends, and grow their personal network, which in turn will give them a wealth of resources and experience which will be available to them when needed.

Be happy, enjoy and revel in your work. If you can't or don't, then do something else. Do something which will provide you happiness and enjoyment.

Dave Ryan-[blog-@davethehrczar](http://davehr.com)

Stop and think

Do you have something to add? How did you start your own career in HR? Maybe you didn't even start in HR at all, and you eventually found yourself in a role that was? I'd love to hear about your own story of career growth and advancement. If you're looking for your first role in the HR field, I'd love to hear from you as well on what you need to succeed.

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So, what's next?

So, you've heard the issues and some responses. Now what? Well, like I asked before, I would appreciate if you could share this guide with any HRYPs you know. Chances are they have some of the same questions, and I know I would deeply appreciate a guide like this if I were in their shoes (wait, I am!). If you're a YP, take what you've learned and apply it to your own situation. If you are not, then take the time to mentor a YP. It's not a full-time commitment, but it can radically change the future of the profession.

These thoughts aren't particularly new or groundbreaking. They are probably the same questions that most new HR pros have faced since time began, and they'll continue to be pertinent to young professionals as time goes on. I just thought it would be a good idea to bridge the gap (at least a little bit) between the new guys/gals and the more experienced/senior HR pros out there. Let's hope it worked.

My job is to draw attention to things that need attention. I'll keep writing if you'll keep reading. Deal? And if something reverberates with you, why not reach out to me? My contact info is below.



Rock it,

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