

21 ideas on how to be a better HR pro this year

Do Amazing Things

in 2011

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About this Book

Hi. Chris Ferdinandi from RenegadeHR.net here.

Do Amazing Things is a collection of short, actionable ideas – things you can do in 2011 to become a better HR professional.

I asked 21 of HR's leading thinkers and doers to share their ideas and insights. There are some clear trends: Collaboration. Innovation. Passion. Growth.

I hope it inspires you to do amazing things this year.

Cheers!
Chris

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Fail More

This year, fail more.

Don't get me wrong - I'm not saying you should try to fail. What I mean is that you need to take more risks. You need to put more of your ideas into action - even the ones you haven't fully worked out yet.

Of course if you do that, you're going to fail more. But you're also going to succeed more.

Thomas Edison once said, "I haven't failed. I've discovered 10,000 ways that don't work."

You're going to learn what works and what doesn't. You're going to discover that some of your great ideas actually suck, and you shouldn't spend any more time on them. You're also going to discover some new, truly great ideas because of those failures.

Launch things before they're perfect. Go for 80-percent - good, not great. Modify and adjust as you go along.

In 2011, fail more.

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Simplify, Simplify, Simplify

It is easy to get caught up in details when you're in HR. I've been there, I know.

There are a million different employee situations, hundreds of new laws every year and a CEO breathing down your neck. When I ask HR professionals why they can't simplify, they have many excuses. Legitimate as they may be, the only way you can become a better HR professional is to simplify how you deal with your job.

How do you do this? Some ways I've done it:

- **Cut 20% from your employee handbook right now.** I've seen dozens of employee handbooks and know it can be done to every single one. I've cut 50% from employee handbooks. Twice. Your aim is readability.
- **Kill the paper trail.** I'm not talking about employee documentation or any of those legal paper trails. I'm talking the CYA paper trail. Kill it and demand accountability and organization instead of a blame trail.
- **Pick up your phone or get out of your office.** Stuck in inbox hell? Not getting the answers you need? Call or walk to the person you need to speak with. And while you're at it, archive everything older than a month by default.
- **Train your managers.** It's amazing what a modest investment in management training can do for you as an HR pro and for your organization as a whole. It's a sound investment and it pays real dividends when dealing with employees.

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Once you get out of HR administrivia purgatory, you can actually get something done. You can talk about recruiting, training, benefits, compensation or retention. You can even get all strategic if that's your game.

In any case, you won't get to do any of those things in a meaningful way unless you simplify the processes of HR.

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Move On

If you want to be great in 2011, move on from 2010. In fact, move on from every year before that. Focus only on what is ahead – this year, this month, this afternoon.

Move on from Past Accomplishments

Accomplishments are important and you have every right to be proud of your successes. As with all good things, the celebration of those successes must come to an end. List them on your resume or LinkedIn profile and move on. Focus on what you can do to create new successes.

Move on from Past Mistakes

We all make mistakes, no one is immune. Learn your lesson, make your restitution and move on. We hold on to our own failures longer than anyone else does. It is time to let it go. Focus on what you can do to prevent mistakes like this in the future.

Move on from Past Hurts

Whether it be your boss, co-worker or subordinate, we have all been hurt or angered at work. To be great in 2011, you have to let it go. Do not hold a grudge. Accept the situation for what it is and focus on building or re-building those relationships in the future.

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Move on from Past Processes

We all cringe when we hear, “but that’s the way it’s always been done” yet we all rest our laurels on it day after day. Make a conscious decision to truly evaluate the old way of doing things and move on from things that are no longer effective.

Move on from “I Can’t”

Many things in life never get accomplished because someone thought they couldn’t do it. We all get stuck in this idea of who we are and a task or new direction that takes us out of that idea immediately gets filtered into the *I can’t* region of our brain. Do not say, “I can’t” this year. Say, “I won’t try” or “I don’t want to.” Better yet, don’t say anything and actually do it.

It is so easy to get tangled up in the past. To be great, truly great, we have to let it go. Move on and get tangled up in new ideas, new accomplishments, new challenges and new greatness.

Sabrina Baker is a human resource professional who helps organizations attract, develop and retain best in class employees. Follow Sabrina on Twitter at [@Sabrina_PHR](https://twitter.com/Sabrina_PHR) and connect with her at [LinkedIn.com/in/SabrinaBaker](https://www.linkedin.com/in/SabrinaBaker).

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Overcome Stereotypes

Stereotypes abound around us. Helping others overcome stereotypes is a part of the job for many in HR. But those in HR also have their own stereotypes to overcome.

One of those we often hear in our line of business is: “People in China don’t want to be recognized individually.”

A client of ours proved this false simply by giving it a try. When implementing a new, first of its kind, global employee recognition program to all 33,000 of its employees, HR leaders knew the large contingent of employees in China couldn’t simply be ignored. And while the solution accounted for both team and individual recognition, leadership didn’t want to limit options for just Chinese employees.

After program launch, the leadership team was pleasantly surprised to discover China had the fastest rate of adoption for greatest number of employees of the new employee recognition program.

By overlooking the “accepted wisdom” and stereotypes, the HR leaders created an environment where every employee benefited from the ability to participate equally and freely in the positive act of both giving and receiving recognition. For their efforts, the HR leaders were rewarded with employee engagement numbers increasing by 25% in less than year.

For their leadership of the recognition program as a whole, the HR team was further rewarded by a nomination for the President’s Award, a prestigious annual recognition given to one team

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in the company for exceptional contribution and achievement and the first time an HR team had ever been nominated.

Be amazing in 2011. When people tell you “you can’t” or “you shouldn’t” because “that’s the way it always is” or “that’s the way they always are,” give it a try anyway.

Overcome the stereotype.

Derek Irvine is VP of Client Strategy and Consulting for Globoforce, the leader in truly global strategic employee recognition programs. In addition to his direct work with companies to create inspiring and motivating recognition programs that move the needle on employee engagement, Derek also blogs regularly at blog.globoforce.com. He is the co-author with CEO Eric Mosley of the recently released book, ["Winning with a Culture of Recognition."](#)

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Drive the Business

Want to do amazing things in 2011? You need to know what you offer as a partner and practitioner. It's not just team and organizational value that helps you deliver but your contribution that gives you right to become a driver of business. Here are some suggestions:

Build relationships that have weight

It's great to know the people. Every individual is important to an engine that runs the core of your company. However, it is powerful when you have the ear and support from the top ranks that are influencers. This relationship can be the difference between feeling lost or empowered in your role.

ROI – Return on Investment

It's not just about the numbers. [ROI](#) is about return on equity. Just because you have profits doesn't mean you haven't lost revenue. Understanding when and where each unit is affected by this activity can help others see that you understand more than just the role on your island.

Scorecards & Measures

This means awareness of the [scorecards & measures](#) for each area you support. When you know what drives each part of the business, you begin to know what drives the business cycle.
When you can't prove impact, prove contribution!

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For many, the toughest part of our work is measuring and proving how we directly make an impact. How HR delivers towards the ROI. How streamlined competencies affect a department change in delivery of services and systems. How an employee's performance either decreases or increases over time.

These are difficult to measure. However, no matter how foggy our impact may seem, a connection can always prove your contribution. Do so and you will see CEO's salivating in excitement.

For example:

1. Understanding your recruiting efforts and differences between processes that include HR recruiters vs. only hiring managers.
2. Tracking sales and retention results of a group of employees certified by training versus those who have not.
3. How technical/culture training you deliver ties directly to the organizations values and impacts changes in behavior.

Remember you're not just an HR person. You are a business person who practices HR.

These approaches may seem scary (you have to deliver on promises and measure you state. You will be held accountable) but they are important to move you from being considered just another employee to being valued as an asset people cannot be without.

Be Daring. Be extraordinary. Be Amazing in 2011!

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Serve Your Customers

Managers are your customers. It's that simple.

Your job is to serve them. It is not to dictate to them or kow-tow to them. Service is most effectively defined by the receivers – not the providers. Try these simple service techniques.

Discover Their Problems

What bothers, aggravates, irritates and frustrates your managers? How can you, using your HR expertise, help them to relieve their distress?

Understand Your Role

Your role is to assist them to contribute more effectively to business results. This applies whether private, public or non-profit. It is not your role to “represent” anybody. Becoming a “father confessor” to unhappy employees creates a wedge between managers and their employees and destroys your credibility.

Speak Their Language

Put the HR jargon in your pocket or purse and leave it there. Learn the language your managers speak and speak it.

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Find Allies

Among your managers are some who really want – not need – your help. Find them. “Serve 'em to death.” Create allies. Remember managers sell other managers. Stop trying to convince your detractors. Let your allies do that.

It's Not Your Job

Don't do managers' work for them. They're paid to manage. That includes manage people. You're paid to inform and support. Make your position about this very clear.

Be Patient

It takes time. You won't be an overnight success. You'll almost certainly have managers who feel that they can get by without you. That's OK. Serve everyone else. And remember: you're not part of the Great Employee Relations Crusade led by the HR Brigade.

If you're professional, in their eyes, you'll be highly regarded.

Leon Noone's from Sydney, Australia. He's worked in and around HR for over 35 years. More of his somewhat unconventional views on people management can be found at ManagingEmployeePerformance.com.

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Be Proactive

Hang around Human Resources people long enough, and you are likely to hear a discussion about how HR professionals need to “learn more about the business” and that they should work to “serve the needs of business.” I like that advice, I think it makes sense, and I have even written and said the same thing in the past. I have realized, though, that it is incomplete advice...it does not go nearly far enough.

To be amazing, HR people need to solve business problems without being asked to do so.

A really smart boss taught me the difference when we were discussing HR services years ago. I mentioned that a partner had good internal relationships, provided great service and really responded to the needs of the business. This was a good HR person by most definitions.

My boss, however, let me know that, to truly set yourself apart, it wasn't enough. The best HR people do all of those things and also **anticipate business needs and drive change.**

Reacting to the business is not good enough.

Get Ahead of It

Amazing HR professionals identify a people issue in the business before the business leaders do, and then they fix it.

Every business is different, but try to find those opportunities in 2011 where you can use your HR expertise to see problems that others don't. Your CEO is not focused 100% of the time on

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people issues, but you are. Be the professional at solving business issues involving people. Identify them, examine them and then drive change in the organization to solve those problems.

As an example, recruiting leaders who make an impact identify talent gaps in the business and proactively develop strategies for long-term supply before the gaps manifest. HR Generalists who are on their game examine the depth of the extended management bench, drive succession planning and create innovative developmental plans to build capacity. Stars in Total Rewards get with their Finance peers to balance world-class benefit delivery with creative cost management before the meeting with the CEO, not after.

The best people in HR, like any profession, get ahead of big issues and find solutions.

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Drive Change

Having grown up outside of HR, it is hard to evaluate the profession at times.

I will admit not always understanding the motivation behind some of the rules and regulations that seem so pervasive at times. I find most HR people to be boring, mindless and unable to see the big picture.

What's worse is that I know for a fact it's NOT true.

Understand your HR reputation precedes you, and what you tell your business partners may be greeted with sniggers and eye-rolling. And it is because they don't understand what you are saying and why they should care.

It is up to all of us to raise the profile of HR. Whether you are an MBA/SPHR certified pro or a former administrative assistant who is really good at following rules, you are representing our community every day.

So here's my tip to my HR brethren: Take the time to examine what you do, how you do it, and why it has to get done.

Know it inside and out from the perspective of the people who pay the bills. Be able to articulate why not doing it would be more expensive to the company in terms of time, money and people.

Next, be ready to stand up and fight for what needs to be done.

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If you have an arsenal of hard numbers and concrete facts in your pocket, you can do great things. But you have to be able to explain it in a way non-HR managers not only understand, but care about. Then hold their feet to the fire with that data.

Drive the change you want to see. And raise hell if it doesn't happen.

Dwane Lay is a recovering IT geek who focuses his time on process improvement in HR. This may mean Lean projects, process redesign, leveraging technology or just pointing out the nonsense to which we too often become numb. He is an unapologetic certification junkie, a social media extrovert, and HR conference conversational butterfly. He can be found noodling about on LeanHRBlog.com, and can be tracked down at about.me/Dwane.Lay.

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Don't Be Such a Wimp

Just today I actually heard a senior leader refer to the HR Department as “a bunch of wimps.”

While he did so in jest, we all know what fuels jest...reality. We were discussing who we might invite to be part of a multi-dimensional contingent dedicated to setting priorities and instilling accountability around practice building initiatives. The over-arching qualifications for candidacy to this contingent was the ability to challenge the status quo, speak with candor, and hold their own with authority.

In his mind, HR is just one big FAIL when it comes to these qualities. And I can't say I disagree.

So if you want to do great things in 2011 – and this will be uncomfortable for most of you – get an edge, thicken that skin, stop slouching, and cause just a little bit of discomfort for others around you.

Discomfort breeds reaction, reaction leads to action, and - positive or negative - action sure beats the alternative.

- Take a position and hold it
- Disagree in public
- Challenge authority
- Raise your voice, lose your temper
- Roll your eyes, frown
- Don't just nod your head, shake it too
- Spark a debate and take the least popular side

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- Spot an injustice and then eradicate it
- Go on the offensive
- Stand up for someone
- Start some banter
- Fight fire with fire
- Risk embarrassment
- Ask “why”?
- Step on a few toes, cross the line, disregard territorial claim
- Fix something that “ain’t broke”...because likely it is
- Hold people accountable
- Have zero tolerance for uber jerks

Like all good things in life, moderation should be observed. But stretching (or allowing) yourself to be this way will be good exercise for your mind, spirit, and soul...and the aura you impart on others.

It will give them pause. It will force them to reconsider your place in the organization. They might even ask you to join in their fun and games.

But if nothing else, they will see you as human. And that’s really the only reason we’re here to begin with.

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Values, Not Words

I recently started working for a small startup company.

They are on top of a lot of things, but the HR function needs some work. One thing we are "missing" is an employee handbook. So I thought to myself, "Why do companies have handbooks anyway? What's the point? Is there really any value in the stack of paper?"

So I broached the topic with my manager, trying to gauge her response. I was pleasantly surprised to hear that she didn't really see the value either.

With that consensus, we decided to leave it off the "to do" list for a while to see how things go.

Fight convention

So many companies have problems. These are deep, recurring issues that seem to occur no matter the industry or size.

What if that is true because people follow the rules, stay safe, and don't push back against silly "we've always done it that way" thinking? I'm excited to be in a place where we question those things that are standards in other organizations.

What's our alternative?

Instead of giving out a handbook, we could replace it with nothing and hope for the best.

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Instead of handing people a big book of "don't do that," we are giving them a solid grasp of our values. When there is a difficult decision to make or if you are unsure how to respond to a situation, fall back on our core, underlying values.

Values, not words, make a workplace great (or terrible).

How are you pushing back against convention?

Ben Eubanks is an HR professional and blogger from Huntsville, AL. During the day he works in the HR department of a small startup company. In his spare time he blogs about human resources and leadership at UpstartHR.com, serves his [local SHRM chapter](#) as the Social Media Director, and cares for the three special ladies in his life.

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Break Out of the Boundaries

It is unfortunate that most employees, regardless of level in an organization are governed by either their own manager's fear of failure or that little voice in their own head that says in order to be successful, stay within set guidelines and boundaries. With today's somewhat precarious employment situation, managers' fears are greater, and that voice in our head is louder. We want to eliminate the fear and uneasiness related to our jobs and our livelihood.

We all do. We are all afraid.

And to eliminate that fear we stay within boundaries hoping to stave off failure. We believe staying within boundaries is the best strategy for our survival. However, we fail to realize, that staying within boundaries we eliminate the possibility of success.

Staying within the boundaries is the best strategy for mediocrity. Mediocrity, while in the short run may keep us from failing – in the long run it is nothing but failure.

The economic concerns of our times have created a situation where more people than ever are taking the sure, mediocre and "safe" route. More people than ever are on a path that will lead to failure.

HR Can Give People Permission to Be Successful

HR has traditionally been the department that made and enforced the rules of behavior. HR is the place to go to find out what you can and can't do. HR was the arbiter of safe. HR was

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where you went to find out where the boundaries were and how to stop before you crossed them.

That should change in 2011.

HR should help people not only find boundaries, but help people find ways to go past them.

This year, give people in the organization permission.

- Permission to be themselves.
- Permission to think.
- Permission to act.
- Permission to question and permission to experiment.
- Permission to be different.
- Permission to be successful.

In 2011, approach each decision from the point of view that you can either enforce the current rules, or find a way to give someone permission to experiment and grow.

You have always had the power to say no. This is the year to say yes.

Paul Hebert is the Managing Director and lead consultant for [i2i](#), a marketing and incentive consultancy, and is widely considered an expert on motivation and incentives. Paul has been interviewed by the BBC, been quoted in USATODAY, been published in Loyalty360 magazine, published whitepapers and articles for HRM Magazine, is a contributing author on [FistfulOfTalent.com](#), a founding member of the HRExaminer Advisory Board, has been a monthly columnist for Incentive Magazine, and is the Social Media Editor for the Enterprise Engagement Alliance.

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Build a Reputation

In 2011 I urge you to develop the reputation of your HR department. Make it evident that HR is part of your company's success and indispensable.

Be Proactive

Quit waiting around for things to happen.

If you have recognized areas within the company that could use improvements – do something about it. Recognize a problem area and develop possible solutions. Go to your leadership prepared to make recommendations and demonstrate the strategic side of HR.

Be Collaborative

Break down the walls of the fortress of solitude that has become a lot of HR departments.

Foster an environment in which HR can be a trusted partner of other departments within your company. Capitalize on the full resources your company provides. Find ways to maintain and be impacted positively by these relationships. Share ideas and best practices.

Be Innovative

Demonstrate that HR is not resistant to change.

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Reward for innovative solutions to difficult issues. Discover new ways of doing routine tasks. Don't let the culture of your company become stale. Think of new ways to encourage your employees to feel pride in your company. Take risks!

Be Thorough

Be logical – think about the big picture.

How will what you are doing impact your HR department? Will it have an impact on the company as a whole? Document, analyze, discuss, and repeat.

Through this process you will truly discover your company – its real mission, vision, values and goals. Take all of this and instill these concepts into your employees. Develop an environment in which HR drives the methods to achieve success.

You will gain respect and a reputation as a strategic and authentic leader. You will bring HR into the spotlight as a necessary function that is truly indispensable.

Stephen Geraghty-Harrison is an operations and people manager with a healthy obsession with social media and technology. His experience includes HR specialist and generalist roles for public and private sector organizations. Follow Stephen on his blog HRwhY.com, or on Twitter at [@SteveMGHarrison](https://twitter.com/SteveMGHarrison).

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Become the Collaboration Leader

Your organization needs collaboration. It wants leaders to build collaboration. HR Pros are positioned to show how it's done.

One my most popular speaking topics is “ How To Collaborate. Really.”

I began speaking about it because of the "silo" behavior I see during consulting engagements and had no idea it would generate such buzz. But you and I understand that knowledge-hoarding cost companies billions in lost opportunities through impeded decision-making.

Think, too, of the potential loss of inclusion that energizes work teams and releases creativity and productivity. Here are three thoughts to share that will help you education your organization and reinforce the business importance of HR:

- 1. Organizational change demands collaboration.** Over the past 35 years I've worked with a lot of talented leaders. Regardless of how smart or savvy a leader may be, he can't transform a thing without the expertise and commitment of others. Anyone impacted by change be involved in the change from the Day One.
- 2. A successful vision is collaborative by definition.** The only time a vision has power is when employees have had some part in its creation.
- 3. Collaboration is a leadership issue.** Organizations of every type have invested millions in technology intended to boost information exchange. To yield meaningful results, a change in attitude and behavior toward collaboration is the only way to put the tools

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into useful action. What does that mean? Successful collaboration is a leadership issue. Talk about it, model it, reward it.

HR Pros are in a unique position to observe the constantly shifting changes around them and the impact at the intersection of people, systems, and productivity.

Use all that you know about human behavior and organization effectiveness to become the Voice of Collaboration: champion, educate, and demonstrate. That's the kind of HR leadership that executives everywhere seek and value.

You can do it. I know you can.

Steve Roesler is Principal and Founder of Roesler Consulting Group. Steve is an award-winner blogger at www.allthingsworkplace.com. The Roesler Group corporate website is at www.steveroesler.com.

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Be Curious

As HR professionals, we are in a unique position to make our organizations successful. To do this, we must deeply understand the organization – what makes it tick, how it creates value for customers, how it generates a profit.

Getting there? It going to take more than HR tradecraft. The good news is that we are surrounded by experts, people who can teach us about the organization's business challenges and possibilities.

All we have to do is start asking the questions.

We hesitate to do this. We don't want to bother others; we don't want to bother ourselves. We balk at stepping outside our own zone of expertise and exposing our ignorance. And so we miss the learning opportunities that come our way with daily conversations and encounters, both scheduled and informal.

How does a sales representative spend their day? An IT manager? A finance specialist? A customer service representative?

What are the biggest obstacles they face – inside and outside the organization – in trying to do their job well? What ideas do they have for process improvement, better service delivery, new products or services? What one thing would help them perform better?

What's happening out in the marketplace for the organization's products or services? Who are its greatest competitors? What is its reputation relative to the competition? What are its

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competitive advantages? Competitive disadvantages? Where is the market headed... and what will it take to stay in (or hopefully ahead of) the game going forward?

Being amazing demands a sense of curiosity, a willingness to probe and ask questions, and an insatiable hunger to understand.

These are powerful attributes for anyone in our profession. The better we understand the full length and width of our organization, its competitive situation, its economics, its strengths and weaknesses, the particular challenges and opportunities it faces, the better able we will be to use our expertise to bring undeniable value to the table.

What questions can you ask today?

Ann Bares is Managing Director of [Altura Consulting Group](#) (specializing in delivering practical, operational employee compensation solutions), author of the blog [CompensationForce.com](#), and founder/editor of the blog [CompensationCafe.com](#).

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Take Charge of Your Development

If you ask HR professionals about the result of their professional development over the past couple of years, you are likely to get a variation of answers.

Why? Because it depends on how the person views development and who they view should take responsibility for their development.

When it comes to professional development, you typically will find professionals have one of two views:

1. I am going to take charge of my professional development, which may include me having to finance that development, but it would be valuable if my organization could also assist; or
2. I am going to solely rely on my organization for my professional development, which includes financing it.

More organizations today are spending less on training and development for employees, much of which the economy impacted, so many HR professionals have found themselves short of the development they were looking for. Therefore, those professionals that rely on the organization for their development are missing out. But the reality is that they do not have too.

There are many development opportunities out there and that are free!

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These include webinars, local seminars, mentoring with someone, or even making a new connection that can teach you something. Depending on your organization to fully develop you and finance that development may result in stunned professional growth. Thus, it is necessary to keep in mind that development is a lot like networking – you have to take the initiative to make it happen.

So how do you become a better HR professional in 2011?

Take charge and develop yourself instead of waiting on others! Create a development plan that evaluates the areas further development is sought, what the development should look like (such as webinars, conferences, mentor, and so on), and how the development can be initiated.

Ultimately, you determine your success.

Question the Norm

Many professionals get caught up in the mix of, “If it is not broke, why fix it?” Operating in this fashion promotes average thinking and performance. Instead, ask, “It may not be broke, but how can I make it better?”

Not all instances will result in better methods to complete tasks, but there are plenty of opportunities that do. Therefore, don’t be afraid to ask questions - but keep it professional. Push yourself out of your comfort level, as this further promotes your self-development.

Push forward your thinking and development!

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Chris Ponder II is a Regional HR Manager with an international residential and business services organization, in which he pushes people and ideas to the extreme by asking questions. You can follow Chris on his blog at XtremeHR.com or on Twitter at [@ChrisPonder](https://twitter.com/ChrisPonder).

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Read More

What have you read lately?

Maryanne Wolf, director of the Center for Reading and Language Research at Tufts University and author of *Proust and the Squid: The Story and Science of the Reading Brain* states, “Typically when you read, you have more time to think. Reading gives you a unique pause button for comprehension and insight.”

Living and working in a hyper-connected world, we have bite-sized morsels of information at our fingertips every day. Whether it is text messages on the handheld, Twitter updates, LinkedIn connections, EventBrite invites or Facebook Places, snippets of information – and distractions - are there for the taking.

And take them we do. We take links, blog posts, discussion updates and article summaries and we very often process them on the fly.

Wait, where’s that pause button Ms. Wolf references above? It’s not on the handheld or the laptop. It’s between the covers of a book.

Reach for a book

It is not necessary to know what you will do with your reading only that you will immerse yourself in it and absorb. “There’s a richness that reading gives you,” Wolf says, “an opportunity to probe more than any other medium I know of. Reading is about not being content with the surface.”

Do Amazing Things in 2011

Reach for a book and prepare yourself for a mind-bending experience.

A book provides a richness not found in even the most solidly written article, blog post, or column. A book engages you long enough for your mind to quiet and notice.

Notice the introduction and how the story, position, or theme develops. Notice the supporting arguments, the research, or the plot. Notice your sharpness of thought as it awakens with each page.

Reach for a book and prepare to see familiar things in a new light, to dig below the surface and to identify unusual and novel connections. Prepare to find the answer to the problem that's been out of reach, a new perspective on an old thought and a creativity you may have given up on ever finding in HR – and yourself.

Lisa Rosendahl, SPHR is a Human Resource professional with over 18 years experience. She writes about leadership, growth and human resources at www.lisarosendahl.com and is co-founder and editor of WomenOfHR.com.

Do Amazing Things in 2011

Learn From Others

One thing that HR can do in 2011 is to become integrated within their organizations.

HR has to stretch across and through departments and not remain a support function. HR efforts that continue to take a back seat and remain strong administratively, but poor strategically will disappear.

Take the steps you need to and show Senior Management that HR permeates all facets of business because all areas of companies have people.

That may seem like a simple approach, but it works. Communicate the fact that companies can have the best processes in the world, but they need to work **through** their people not **in spite** of their people. Show the company that HR in a silo actually leads to more problems because HR needs to be out among the employees.

It is essential that HR look at itself as a vital business function and not someone who just keeps the company out of court. HR has so much more to offer than being the compliance arm of organizations.

Instead, take the first part of 2011 and reflect how your HR function impacts others.

Develop a strategy that builds upon this impact and then design a method that not only launches these efforts, but keeps them sustainable. There is no one "right" method or approach because each company's culture is unique and so is its philosophy towards HR.

Do Amazing Things in 2011

This may seem like a stretch, but it works. Stop being isolated and having people come to you. Start going out to them!

Steve Browne, SPHR, is the Executive Director of HR for LaRosa's, Inc., a regional pizzeria which is a tradition in the Greater Cincinnati area. He is also the current Chair for the 2010 Ohio HR Conference, the Ohio State Council Director elect and runs an international HR message board called the HR Net. Read Steve's blog at SBrowneHR.com.

Do Amazing Things in 2011

Shadow Someone

For many of us, we begin our career in human resources and we learn the business we're supporting out of pure necessity. But, how many HR pros actually sit down with various employees and learn what that individual does?

In the day-to-day hustle and bustle of working, we lose sight of taking opportunities to sit down and focus on one thing for long. Our time is parceled out in infinitesimal increments, making focus and application of learning arduous.

That reason combined with the benefits of job shadowing make it a low cost way to improve your HR and business skills. The price is your time.

What are some of the benefits of shadowing?

Cognizance of the business. Your level of knowledge will transcend a rudimentary level. You'll begin to know instinctively what questions to ask as you guide department leaders through employee situations.

Integration. Being seen as "one of the team" instead of "HR". You will know what pressures the department faces, their challenges, and how they succeed. This will open up opportunities for department leaders to bring you in when they need you most, to strategize.

Culture adaptation. Culture exists in the holistic sense for an organization, but job shadowing will allow you to view and experience the internal cultures of the departments.

Do Amazing Things in 2011

Opportunity to demonstrate critical thinking. This almost goes without saying. When you are a visible participant in how a department runs, you will pick up on areas to improve and you will have a more natural opportunity to share ideas.

The only way to achieve greatness in your career is to invest in the time it takes to get there.

Trish McFarlane is a practicing HR professional, international speaker, writer, and co-founder of the [HRevolution conference](#) and [WomenOfHR.com](#). She also writes the acclaimed human resource blog [HRRingleader.com](#).

Do Amazing Things in 2011

Just Be Earnest

I received a mailer from SHRM several weeks ago that told me my “customized HR Metrics await inside.”

What I found inside were words enticing me to purchase benchmarking reports that contain over 140 metrics on human capital, health care, and retirement/welfare. It also said I can customize these reports based on industry and employee size. Furthermore, I can purchase these reports at a fraction of the cost.

Amidst this promotional hubbub, was the sentence: “HR professionals will be able to justify their position and strategize by comparing their data with similar organizations.”

Really? Did I just read the words, “justify their position?”

I showed this to a colleague and she said she thinks it refers to your position within the benchmark. I said I think the words are a marketing tool playing upon the inferiority complex of human resources professionals who feel unappreciated at their organizations. If that's the case, shame on you SHRM for playing on these fears.

Do you want to know how to justify your position?

Tell your CEO, President, Head Honcho, or whatever, “I am in charge of **Human** Resources. And that the last time I checked, every employee in this organization is a **human**. And until I am assured that every employee in this organization is, can be, and will be treated like a **human** being, then I’m sticking around.”

Do Amazing Things in 2011

I do not have any problems with data. In fact, I love data. However, HR needs to stop trying to complicate its role so it feels more important. HR needs to be zealous about their profession and show their organizations a deep sincerity for the work.

If you want to be taken seriously, demonstrate intense conviction. Stop showing off charts, news articles and conference flyers to prove your credibility.

Just be earnest.

Paul Smith is an HR Manager for a non-profit in Philadelphia. He has worked in HR for over ten years in a variety of fields including wholesale, nursing and banking, specializing in HRD, recruiting, benefits, and diversity & inclusion. He can be found on Twitter as [@pasmuz](#) and writes the workplace blog, WelcomeToTheOccupation.com.

Do Amazing Things in 2011

Love What You Do or Get Out

HR is a hard job.

You're at the center of key touch points of the employee lifecycle where emotions are often running high. Sometimes you will be the hero and at other times you'll be despised – for being the policy enforcer, the bearer of bad news or god forbid, the fun police.

Many HR professionals start out bright eyed and bushy tailed, all ready to change the world and make a difference, only to become depressed and jaded years later because it hasn't gone quite how they pictured it. They got told to do things they felt were morally wrong. They saw leaders do the wrong thing and get away with it. They burn out. In the end it appears that emotionally detaching from actually caring is the only way to survive.

So you know what? Get excited about what you are doing or for god sake's, f@#\$ off and do something else – you are ruining it for the rest of us!

Yes, we've all been in that dark place where everything is too hard, but you've got to reignite that passion and purpose for your job or there's no point. We spend way too long at work to be a miserable, emotionally detached sack while we are there.

Some considerations

Look inward first. Are you taking care of yourself and giving yourself the best possible chance to be happy? Are you exercising, eating properly and sleeping well?

Do Amazing Things in 2011

Tired of doing the same old thing? Go do something different for a bit. Transfer into a role outside of HR and see the business from a different point of view. It might be the change in perspective you need to see that everything is not as black and white as you made it out to be when you were in HR.

Finally, the best way I find to rejuvenate and reignite my passion is to surround myself with other exciting, passionate HR professionals, so starting reading some blogs and commenting on them. Get your LinkedIn profile and start making connections. Join twitter and get involved in the conversation. Organize a local network in your area, invite guest speakers or even just to have a glass of wine at the end of the day.

If none of this works and you still find yourself jaded, get out. We need everyone on board and we as a HR Community are only as strong as our weakest link.

Jess Booth is a Leadership Capability Coach based in Sydney, Australia. She's the founder HRClubSydney.com, a blog and Sydney based HR professional network. She's all about sharing knowledge in the HR community so connect with her on LinkedIn or follow her on Twitter at [@JessicaBooth](https://twitter.com/JessicaBooth).

Do Amazing Things in 2011

Know Why You Work

I'm not sure if there is a question I ask that returns more profound or more inane responses than, "Why do you work?"

On the one hand we have the "9 to 5'ers" whose response is always some permutation of "I have bills to pay." Then there are those I call *Deep Leaders*, whose work lives are deeply rooted in a commitment to something bigger than themselves and certainly bigger than a paycheck.

Human resource professionals who are not coaching, hiring, and developing talent with an eye toward the *why* of work are doing their organizations a great disservice. While this concept of deep leadership may sound soft at first, consider the following advantages of an employee with a *why* as well the necessary *how*.

Weathering the Storm

Nietzsche said it best, "He who has a why to live can bear with almost any how."

The past three years have brought unprecedented stress and uncertainty to bear on the professional lives of our employees. Those with a firm foundation, rooted in a meaningful commitment to the mission of an organization or a personal passion for the work are the only ones left standing.

Forget courses on *Leadership in Tough Times!* Hire leaders whose commitment to your organizational *raison d'être* is unwavering, even in the toughest times.

Do Amazing Things in 2011

10,000 Reasons for a Reason

As an HR professional, your primary mission is to hire and develop great people. So, who are these extraordinary performers you need on your team?

In his study of the highly successful, Malcolm Gladwell found it took roughly 10,000 hours of practice at something to truly be called an outlier in terms of performance. He further suggests that if individuals do not find their work meaningful, they will never put in the necessary practice time to be great at what they do.

So, you say you want great people, huh? Hire those that care enough to put in the hard work to be great at what they do.

In the Zone

Ever hear an athlete talk about being *in the zone*? A time when she was so locked in that she could not help but hit every three-pointer she shot?

Psychologists like myself call this phenomenon *flow*, or the psychology of optimal experience.

It turns out that focus on a deeply felt meaning is much of what creates a flow state. Says Dr. Csikszentmihalyi, the leading flow researcher, "Creating meaning involves bringing order to the contents of the mind by integrating one's actions into a unified flow experience." In a modern workplace so characterized by distraction, one can hardly overestimate the value of this sort of focus.

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So, why do YOU work?

If your response and the responses of your employees reflect meaningful engagement with the direction of your organization, you are on your way to doing amazing things in 2011.

If not, maybe it's time to reassess your direction. After all, you could be better, more focused, and more resilient if you found something that mattered to you a little more.

Dr. Daniel Crosby is a corporate psychologist and President of [Crosby Performance Consulting](#). Daniel is currently writing a book on the importance of deep leadership. You can follow Daniel on Twitter at [@crosbypsych](#).

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