

The “Disconnect” that is HR Services: Lead, Don’t Follow

Corporate expectations regarding the role of HR have been rising over the past 10 years – shifting from caretaker of administrative processes to value-adding business partner. But while this is an exciting (and challenging) prospect for aspirational HR departments, the big question is: What does this really mean and how should HR transform to meet this expectation?

Adrian Ole, GM of Talent Management at medical, clinical, and security services firm International SOS, says it is important to understand what business leaders really want the HR department to become. In attempting to answer this seemingly basic question, however, Adrian found several surprising disconnects between what HR thought the company needed and what business leaders actually wanted.

Before HR can become a business ally, Adrian told a packed room at SSON’s 17th Annual Asian Shared Services & Outsourcing Week, it needs to really understand the business at present – to the extent that it could develop its own 3 year strategies, like Finance or IT. If not, he warned, HR runs the risk of forever being relegated to following strategies set by other branches of the business.

Despite the very real potential benefits of transformation, unless HR plans its journey to meet the needs and expectations of business leaders, the aspired “seat at the table” will remain out of reach. Crucially, HR has to avoid the trap of creating HR services for HR, and instead, look to creating HR for HR customers, defined by services strongly aligned with business aims.

If you are struggling with where (and how) to begin, Adrian has a solution: “Ask Finance and IT, because it’s quite likely that they’ve either already been through it, or are going through it right now.”

Although HR’s strategic role as a business partner will be different from that of Finance and IT, the core ethos of understanding and transforming to meet the true expectations of senior management is essential.

“There’s already a seat waiting for us at the table” explained Adrian. “We just have to step up, add value and take it.”

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