

Competencies, Experiences Required of Outsourcing Pros

To thrive in the HRO world, expect to develop a broader skill set than those practiced in HR. By Lisa Maxwell



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So you think you have the right skills and competencies to get ahead in HRO? If you answered yes, consider the fact that competition for talent in outsourcing continues to be highly aggressive. However, HRO professionals who have superior skills and experiences and want to work in a strategic, consultative role will continue to have expanded career opportunities.

The long-term competitive advantage in HRO rests, in large part, on the recruitment, development and retention of management and executive talent. But what combination of knowledge, skills, abilities and characteristics are required for success in outsourcing?

The following list includes but is not limited to attributes and skills required for success in HRO.

n Process Management. A successful HRO professional needs to understand process. It is a fundamental tool for execution in outsourcing and allows a very large number of people to work together on a collaborative project. It is critical for outsourcing professionals to thoroughly map a process from the outset through transition. Hands-on experience is critical. If someone doesn't have that experience, it will be hard to understand and advise when things go wrong, as they often do.

"They need to have managed directly and/or participated in the implementation of HR processes to understand HRO from a practical point of view. They need to grasp the financial impacts," stated Sue Francisco, a director at sourcing advisory firm TPI.

n Deep Subject Matter Expertise. It is extremely important to appreciate all of the different aspects of HR and how they impact the entire organization. Understanding the environment of the client company and the implications outsourcing will have is necessary. The result is alignment of human capital strategies with true business needs. As Dan White, global practice leader, recruiting services for IBM, explained: "You have to see the big picture and also drill down into the minute detail."

n Technical Skills. HRO has historically assumed a huge role in technology implementation and integration. It is important to have functional expertise and knowledge of HR applications. "Knowledge of ERP applications and

major talent management suites is critical. The ability to evaluate, input, and confidently assemble a global, repeatable, and scalable product offering is key," affirmed Barry Mills, director of channel relationships for Taleo. Keeping current with the latest technical developments in HR and knowing how to deploy your resources for the maximum return on investment are crucial.

n Compassion. Human resources, by nature, is compassionate. Showing empathy and optimism are vital competencies and an integral part of success in HRO. Someone who understands change management and how to effectively communicate is vital. The ability to estimate what impact a change will likely have on work processes, technological requirements, and motivation is critical. HRO professionals need to assess what employee reactions will be and craft a change program that will provide support as workers go through the process.

n Flexibility in Culture. It is important for people to align with the culture of the company they work for and also for the outsourcing industry as a whole. In the case of HRO, you have two cultures to accommodate. As White noted: "The first culture you have to adopt is the customer's culture; the second culture is that of your company. I have people who adapt to the customer's culture more so than IBM's culture. You want it to be that way." The ability to accommodate and conform to different environments is significant.

n Openness. Exposure to other companies and what is happening in the industry is important. In order to grow beyond the scope of an adversarial mentality, you must think of your competitors as your mentors. Your competitors bring out the best in you and for that you both mutually grow in the process. "Everybody has his own way of doing things that he think is best," stated Francisco. "Be willing to learn from each other so the industry becomes better in serving the customer."

Finally, the ability to influence business leaders is essential. The decision to outsource is made at the very top of an organization. To serve as an effective business partner, the outsourcing professional needs to be a strategic thinker who can guide senior level decision makers to deliver business results. **HRO**