First 100 Days: A Guide for New-to-Role Heads of HR
Hit the ground running

Research shows that executives who effectively plan and execute their transitions reach full productivity sooner. With the insights, peer advice and other tools included in this booklet, you'll be ready to accelerate your transition to drive impact at your organization.

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5 Resources for HR Leaders in a New Role
gtnr.it/ntr-hr
Nine steps for a quick, successful transition

New heads of HR face an overwhelming number of tasks during their first few months. When making the leap to a new position, almost half (46%) of executives across all functions — HR included — tumble and underperform.

Heads of HR struggle not because they lack the skills, but due to factors ranging from limited support networks to temporary support for the first few months. Executives who effectively plan and execute their transitions reach full productivity nine months before their peers.

Gartner analyzed thousands of leadership transitions, and uncovered nine steps you can take to establish yourself as an effective enterprise leader during your transition and beyond.

1. Accelerate your listening tour
   Strategically structure your listening tour to ensure you’re meeting with the stakeholders who will provide the most value. Fostering strong relationships increases transition success by almost 50%.
   Extend the reach and impact of your listening tour with Gartner’s FastForward, a transition service to rapidly collect feedback and information from up to 200 stakeholders on performance, team potential and strategy.

2. Solidify your CEO working relationship
   Navigate the complexity of your dual role as the CEO’s direct report and confidant, and tackle the key responsibilities that come with each role.
   Gartner’s semiannual CEO 20 Benchmarking Report provides insights into what’s on the CEO agenda and how heads of HR are responding.

3. Make a good first impression with board members
   First impressions with the board are usually formed outside the boardroom. Don’t undervalue informal conversations to learn members’ expectations.
   Strategize with your Gartner advisor on the unique questions you should ask your board members to build stronger relationships.
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<tr>
<th>4. Build trust with your HR leadership team</th>
<th>Your new team may feel uncertain about the impact of a new leader. Demonstrate your respect for their experience and tenure to build trust in the team. Solicit their perspective on the current maturity of the function and where they would prioritize investments with Gartner’s Ignition Diagnostic for HR.</th>
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<td>5. Align HR leaders with your new vision and strategy</td>
<td>Assess how well individuals on your team are aligned with your new vision and strategy. The value of strategic plans lies in the quality of their input and the ability to execute. Engage line leaders early on and eliminate legacy behaviors inside HR with Gartner’s step-by-step Ignition Guide to Strategic Planning.</td>
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<td>6. Connect HR staff to your new vision and strategy</td>
<td>Staff who are aligned to your strategy can have a 12% to 22% performance increase. Ensure alignment by communicating in a way that encourages staff to proactively engage. Utilize Gartner’s HR Strategy on a Page template to effectively and succinctly communicate your strategy to your team.</td>
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<td>7. Generate credibility and momentum with a quick win</td>
<td>While quick wins can enable leaders to outperform their peers by 20%, they can also foster detrimental behaviors such as dismissing others’ ideas and micromanaging. Confront this quick-win paradox by incorporating others to achieve a collective quick win. Engage your team in the process of scoring a collective quick win for your new strategy with Gartner’s Quick-Wins Prioritization template.</td>
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<td>8. Link talent to strategy in your first board presentation</td>
<td>Getting your first board presentation right makes talent 30% more likely to be tied to the board’s corporate strategy discussions. Successfully explaining your strategy can cement your credibility. Create a compelling presentation with Gartner’s CHRO Board Presentation guide and template.</td>
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<td>9. Break through political barriers</td>
<td>Use your opportunity as an outsider to courageously confront unaddressed barriers that are hindering performance throughout the company and C-suite. Navigate complex relationships and processes with a Gartner advisor, who can offer a third-party, objective opinion.</td>
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Advice from heads of HR

**Fit: Understanding and adapting to the way the organization does business**

**Learn the business**

“You have to start by making sure you understand how your company makes money. How does the business flourish? What are the business strategies? It’s very important that you anchor all of your work and your strategies that you develop for HR around business. What are you trying to accomplish?”

*Jorge Figueredo*
Executive Vice President, HR, McKesson Corporation

**Evaluate your team**

“I think one of the first things you need to do is assess your current talent base, sort of understand them both from a technical perspective — and obviously there's a technical skill set in all of those different areas — but just as importantly, understand their ability to influence, their relationships with different stakeholders and line leaders within the business, and how they can effectively get things done; sometimes people are very strong technically but not so good at working their way through an organization, and you need a team that can do both.”

*Michele Crosby*
EVP and CHRO, FRHI Hotels & Resorts

**Focus: Clarifying expectations for the role**

**Let go of old habits**

“You have to be self-aware to not micromanage, and that is a real trap a lot of people fall into. If they happen to move up in the organization from the organization they grew up in, they probably are expert at what it is that they now lead, and it would be very easy to fall into the trap of micromanagement; but if you are really focused on leadership and understand what leadership is all about, you won’t do that. You’ll understand that your role as a leader is more about managing the context and developing those under you, not to micromanage and tell them what to do.”

*Jody Hudson*
Deputy Chief Human Capital Officer
U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission
**Future: Defining strategic priorities**

**Achieve quick wins**

"I think quick wins for the CHRO are really important in the first few months. For me, one of the wins that I’d agreed with the CEO on was to identify team dynamics with the leadership team that I could promptly give feedback on whenever I saw it. The challenge with quick wins is they’re very quickly forgotten, and so getting into your stride and finding things to continue with becomes very important."

Robert Rigby-Hall  
EVP & CHRO, NXP Semiconductors

**Build your brand**

“When I think about the chief people officer and how you show up internally and externally, I think about legacy. My most important advice is be the role model you want from others. Take people with you. Every role that you leave, leave a legacy of successors behind. I think it’s incredibly important to be a problem solver, to be a great representative — not just of your function but of your entire business and industry as well.

“And that would be my final point, to the extent that you have an opportunity to do work beyond our HR functional excellence — board seats, nonprofits, running communications, taking on social responsibility — those are brand builders for you as an individual, for us as functional leaders, and for your team, their pride, and their chance to expand and do new things. That’s what makes up your brand:"

Eva Sage-Gavin  
Former EVP, HR & Corporate Affairs, Gap Inc.  
Vice Chairman, Skills for America’s Future, Aspen Institute
The Core Roles of a World Class CHRO

Talent is one of the biggest differentiators of organizational performance, reshaping the head of HR’s role into one of the most high-profile C-suite positions.

For example, with 63% of CEOs concerned about the availability of key skills, 46% of CHROs are spending more time discussing organizational strategy with the CEO and the board than they did just two years ago. It’s not simply the amount of time, but also the way HR executives spend time, that is changing.

To help current and aspiring heads of HR stay ahead of HR trends, we’ve identified five ways the role is evolving that we anticipate will separate the best from the rest in the next few years.

1. Different-in-kind board relationships

Engaging the board has long been a critical skill, from working on the compensation committee to making formal presentations. But this relationship is becoming more personal and requires a step change in CHROs’ stakeholder management skills.

Specifically, as meetings with board members become more frequent, more informal and more individualized, CHROs have to more carefully manage these relationships to ensure that they remain objective, neutral leaders. We’ve also seen an increase in requests from these leaders for guidance on selecting and managing board members’ performance.

To become a world-class CHRO, you must also guide the board’s thinking on a range of talent topics. Wherever major strategic shifts in markets or society intersect with human capital, CHROs should be on hand to provide a point of view and strategy on how these human capital issues should best be managed. Successfully providing thought leadership and influencing the outcome of board meetings related to a CEO transition, a response to a key external trend, a substantial business growth opportunity or a major repositioning of the workforce is often one of the defining experiences of a world-class CHRO’s career.

2. Creator of talent strategy

With organizations facing new competition, new opportunities and new geographies, the CHRO is tasked with designing a people strategy that examines how the organization really works and that places the right people in the right roles at the right place and time to drive business outcomes.

CEOs and organizations rely on the HR leader’s vision for finding, managing and developing employees to accomplish their strategic goals. This isn’t a vision that starts where business strategy ends. Rather, talent strategy and business strategy discussions are concurrent and complementary. HR leaders work with other business leaders to determine what is possible for the organization to achieve from a people perspective and what capabilities the organization needs to succeed in the future.
World-class CHROs keep their eyes very much on the horizon. They identify future trends (e.g., automation, artificial intelligence and robotics), opportunities and disruptions to the business, and shift their workforce strategies to seize the opportunities present or blunt their adverse effects. Trendspotting, and developing strategies and contingencies for the most important ones, fall squarely on the shoulders of the world’s most capable CHROs.

3. Becoming true enterprise leaders (with a talent edge)

“The highest compliment I’ve ever received from a business leader is that the leader viewed me not only as the chief HR executive but also as a business leader and trusted advisor.” This quote from a tech CHRO captures what many have told us defines success in the role. By being completely tuned into operations, leading HR executives apply their talent management expertise more effectively to influence enterprise priorities and decisions beyond talent. In fact, 71% of heads of HR are spending more time on issues not related to their function or talent.

However, CHROs should also be cautious to not overinvest their time in this role. They can provide deep insight into the dynamics of the leadership team and give helpful feedback, but should not become a crutch to the leadership team or focus solely on helping executives get along with each other. Similarly, they need to be impartial in the face of high-stakes conversations and situations, and must be prepared to put their careers on the line to defend a position.

Which of the following nontalent activities have you worked on with your CEO and/or board in the past year?

- Driving the company’s corporate social responsibility agenda: 45%
- Updating the company’s rules for corporate governance: 43%
- Managing relationships between board members: 41%
- Planning a response to new legislative requirements: 40%
- Forging strategic partnerships with external organizations: 36%
4. Driver of culture and purpose

The CEO is the unquestioned owner of the organizational culture. Almost all CEOs believe in the importance of culture, and a majority are heavily involved in managing it.

At the same time, they need their head of HR to be a key partner in building and evolving a culture that drives performance. Today less than one-third of CEOs believe their culture strongly prepares them for strategy changes, structural changes and external trends. Plus, business disruptions are subjecting culture to more scrutiny from consumers and shareholders alike.

A CHRO needs to know how to align the workforce to the culture, holding people, programs and processes accountable for getting work done in ways that reinforce the organization’s purpose. Heads of HR who successfully drive the culture across messaging, behaviors and business processes will see direct results in key business metrics, including up to 9% improvement in performance against revenue goals.

5. Trusted advisor and coach

Being able to build trust with the CEO and credibility among fellow senior leaders is a requirement for the job. The CEO-CHRO relationship is unique among all executive partnerships, as the CHRO is an advisor on not only the human capital issues a CEO might face, but also everything from business strategy to leadership style — acting as a sounding board. World-class HR leaders are the executives most willing to confront their CEOs with uncomfortable truths that need to be heard, and are able to advocate for the CEO to take a different position on a key issue.

A strong relationship with senior leaders ensures that an organization is getting the most from its leadership team, through both individual coaching and a keen understanding of how to build effective senior teams. Although the CEO, board and executive team are interdependent, each requires an independent investment on the part of the CHRO. The top levels of an organization can be highly politicized, and a CHRO has to navigate this environment while providing balanced, objective and honest counsel to senior leaders.

As with the CEO, heads of HR are often called upon to deliver the hard truths organizations face, and to hold senior leaders accountable to a promised brand of leadership. The key to success is that CHROs must be unparalleled listeners, maintaining strict confidentiality and unwavering ethics at all times.

“HR credibility is built when its leaders come up with ideas that will move the business forward that on their face have nothing to do with HR.”

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Learn More
Helpful Resources for CHROs

The CHRO Self Diagnostic

The CHRO Self-Diagnostic allows current and aspiring heads of HR to evaluate their mastery of and the importance of activities core to the CHRO role. Upon completion of the survey, participants immediately receive a personalized feedback report detailing their strengths, development opportunities and next steps based on responses.

Take the Diagnostic

HR Strategy on a Page

Use the HR Strategy on a Page template to develop and communicate a clear, concise and measurable strategic plan for HR.

Download the Template

Future of Work Trends Post-COVID-19

Gartner surveyed 400+ HR leaders and 300+ finance leaders, and spoke with more than 4,000 employees to identify the trends HR leaders are facing regarding their return to the workplace post-COVID-19 and its long-term impact on the future of work. This guide details nine emerging trends identified and what HR leaders can do to address them.

View the Guide
Lead your HR function to success with Gartner for HR, the definitive, comprehensive research and advisory resource for HR decision makers.

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