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Victory Through Organization

Why the War for Talent Is Failing Your Company and What You Can Do About It

THE SUMMARY IN BRIEF

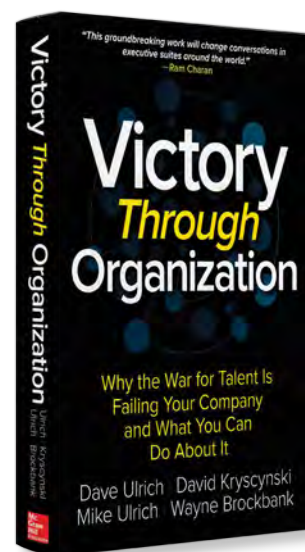
For the past two decades, business leaders and human resources professionals have been consumed with the war for talent, investing vast sums of money to bring in and manage people. The groundbreaking research in *Victory Through Organization* reveals that winning the war for talent requires more than managing people; it requires an organization that turns individual people into organizational capabilities. Data from more than 32,000 people in 1,200 businesses reveal that an organization has four times the impact on business performance compared with individual talent.

Dave Ulrich and Wayne Brockbank, who are professors and advisers to hundreds of companies, have studied the competencies of HR professionals for more than 30 years. With new insights from David Kryscynski and Mike Ulrich, their team collected data from more than 32,000 respondents to determine how HR can deliver both individual competence and organizational capability to add tangible value to key stakeholders as well as to short-term business results. Through this framework, you'll focus on the workplace as much as on the workforce, on process as much as on people, on organizational capabilities as much as on individual competencies.

Victory Through Organization is ideal for business and HR executives charged with building a more effective HR department and HR practices, and it is an essential guide for any HR professional committed to creating value.

IN THIS SUMMARY, YOU WILL LEARN:

- How to upgrade your HR professionals by determining which HR competencies have the most impact on personal effectiveness, stakeholder outcomes and business results.
- To recognize the key ingredients of a more effective HR department with a focus on assessing business information and offering integrated HR solutions.



by Dave Ulrich,
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THE COMPLETE SUMMARY: VICTORY THROUGH ORGANIZATION

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PART I: HR MATTERS

Why HR and Why Now?

HR is not about HR: It begins and ends with the business. Every business is a product of its context. Business success comes when the internal strategy anticipates or responds to external conditions.

When business leaders are asked about their most difficult challenges in responding to external challenges, they often refer to executing with discipline, deploying talent, ensuring leadership, managing change, using information and transforming culture. These are all HR-related issues. Business leaders increasingly recognize that much of their success ultimately comes from wise and well-directed HR efforts.

Bottom line: These days, business leaders care about HR because these HR issues are now business issues.

The Four Forces Reshaping HR Impact on Business Success

There are four reasons why HR matters more now than ever for business success: business context, pace of change, stakeholder expectations and personal context. For HR professionals and business leaders to fully understand the increased expectations of HR, it is useful to recognize and adapt to these four forces.

Force 1: Emerging Business Context. Six categories known as the STEPED framework can be used by leaders to understand how contextual changes affect how businesses operate.

- Social (expectations, values, lifestyle, have/have-nots)
- Technological (information access and frequency)

- Environmental (public policy, social responsibility, care for the planet)
- Political (regulatory shifts)
- Economic (industry evolution, industry consolidation)
- Demographic (age, education and background of people)

Using this framework, leaders can better diagnose geographic or industry trends.

Force 2: Increased Pace of Change. The four trends of the VUCA model (Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, Ambiguity) can be used to define the intensity and pace of change. VUCA requires that organizations become agile and responsive. HR professionals can help business teams feel less threatened by and more able to respond to external changes by facilitating structured dialogues around these external trends.

Force 3: Key Stakeholder Expectations. Understanding stakeholder expectations defines who HR must satisfy to help the firm succeed. HR is increasingly being asked to help deliver customer share, investor intangibles, community reputation and partnership cooperation. As these external stakeholder expectations increase, HR plays a significant role in delivering these outcomes.

Force 4: The Personal Context of Today's Work. People's responses to workplace change — and workplace behavior itself — is influenced by six societal shifts (Six I's) that put enormous pressure on shaping the emotional impact of how people live and work: Intensity, Individuation, Isolation, Indifference, Immediacy and In-group (labels). These trends define how individuals live and have the potential to undermine and destabilize organizations. HR professionals have the challenge to shift these into



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positive opportunities to enable their organization to become communities of action where:

- Employees channel intensity to create value for others.
- Individual self-interest is replaced by shared purpose.
- Isolation is overcome with personal connection.
- Indifference shifts to renewal.
- Immediacy for today's results become the pathway for a longer-term vision or strategy.
- Labels are replaced with valuing differences that make teams stronger than individuals.

When these six contextual trends turn positive, HR professionals help individuals replace cynicism with commitment and isolation with community. ●

PART II: ORGANIZATION

Why Organization Matters

Organization matters. In fact, it matters a lot. To stakeholders, organization matters more than individual talent. Stakeholders recognize the importance of individual talent, but they primarily hold the organization accountable.

If the focus on talent becomes overly emphasized, it might well be counterproductive to HR's ability to optimize its impact on business performance.

The vulnerability of the talent paradigm is that it focuses on optimizing individual contributions. This is not to say that companies should not do their very best to hire and nurture very good individual talent. However, talent in and of itself will tend not to create competitive advantage.

The competitive advantage is what you do with the talent once you have it. And that is an organization issue.

Competitive advantage is found in making the organizational whole greater than the sum of the parts. It is this integrating and leveraging function of organization that creates competitive advantage.

Organization Capability

The most powerful way to think about organization is through the logic of "organizational capability." Capabilities represent what the organization is good at doing toward implementing its strategy and creating value for its stakeholders.

Capabilities include how the organization patterns the collective human intelligence and activities through integrated infrastructure processes, structures, incentives, skills, training and information flow.

To optimize the likelihood of achieving competitive advantage and business success, here is a four-step process.

Step 1: Firms should first identify the organizational capabilities that they must have to meet the requirements of customers and stakeholders.

Step 2: Companies should then identify the core technical capabilities that will be required to meet these market-based requirements.

Step 3: To fully leverage these technical capabilities and to guide the workforce toward the market-based outcome, the firm must specify its desired culture, that is, how people need to think and behave together in ways that are consistent with market requirements.

Step 4: The full system of organizational practices must then be designed and delivered to build the core technical capabilities of the firm and to encourage people individually and collectively to think and behave in ways that will meet the requirements of their customers and owners.

Organizations exist to fulfill fundamental social purposes that are represented primarily by customers and shareholders. If a company fails to deliver on its socially derived purposes as well as others, then customers and owners withdraw their support. Thus, organizational capabilities must be defined from the outside in. The driving question is *Does your firm have the organizational capabilities that ensure that it meets the current and future requirements of the marketplace better than its competitors?*

Obviously not all customers are equally important. Having a clear understanding of the requirements of your most important present and future customers is paramount.

In addition to customer requirements other criteria may also be applied to identifying a firm's required organizational capabilities including shareholder expectations, process or product technology, economic health of the industry, suppliers' market power, level of industry competitiveness, globalization, the availability of human capital, product life-cycle trends, and the speed of technological innovation.

Integrated HR Practices

The integrated approach to HR has been discussed under a variety of different terminologies including high-performing work systems, strategic human resource management and HR systems. The most accurate terminology is integrated HR systems.

Research has concluded that no single subsystem of HR has significant influence on business performance in isolation. However, the integrated combination of staffing, training and development, talent engagement, job design and information management does have powerful statistical influence on a wide array of organizational performance measures.

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With a clear understanding of both the desired culture and required technical competencies, the full breadth of HR practices and related policies may then be designed and delivered to create the HR department capable of delivering integrated HR practices. ●

PART III: INDIVIDUAL

Credible Activist

Before HR professionals can consistently have an impact on the organization, they must be invited to be a part of the business conversation. To get a seat at the table, HR professionals need to demonstrate the competence of trust — which comes in part from taking proactive positions with a point of view about the business and HR's role in business success. They need to be Credible Activists.

Credible Activists use earned trust to get invited to business conversations where they can drive the right kinds of business conversations and initiatives. They build upon the trust by focusing on matters important to business outcomes and by delivering impactful results for the business. Once the trust is obtained, Credible Activists take risks that may be outside their comfort zone to challenge organizational norms, practices and ways of thinking.

Influencing and Relating to Others

Credible Activists are conscientious about their relationships with colleagues and business partners and invest in these relationships. They build relationships up and down and across the organization. They also look beyond the organization to develop relationships that will provide an outside-in perspective to help tackle challenges.

To influence and relate to others and to develop relationships, Credible Activists:

- Show a genuine interest in others.
- Act with an appropriate balance of humility and confidence.
- Seek to learn from both successes and failures.
- Demonstrate personal integrity and ethics.

Influence and relationships build trust, but ultimately professional effectiveness starts and ends with results. Credible Activists build credibility over time by delivering results, improving personal and professional performance, developing relationships of trust internally and externally, and using the trust to influence others. ●

Strategic Positioner

HR professionals need to be an equal partner in setting the direction for the organization and getting it moving in the right direction. When HR professionals bring unique information, insights and recommendations about talent, leadership and organization, they become Strategic Positioners who help deliver competitive advantage.

Positioning refers to the HR professional's ability to understand the business context and create a future for the organization — recognizing emerging trends and responding to them. Positioning is more than being able to identify and flex to respond to new opportunities, *it is being able to transform the organization to fit those opportunities.*

The four phases of being a Strategic Positioner are:

1. Master the language and flow of business.
2. Recognize and deliver strategy and sources of competitive advantage.
3. Understand and co-create with external stakeholders.
4. Anticipate and react to external business trends and context.

Today, more than ever, HR work crosses functional boundaries with marketing (building firm, leadership and employee brands), finance (using HR to manage financial returns as well as intangibles for investors), and IT (ensuring that information capabilities are part of a firm's success). HR professionals need to know enough of the language to have the business literacy to understand and contribute to the business conversation.

HR professionals also need to know how the business makes money and what the key differentiators of the business are. Strategic decision making, fast change, infrastructure design, and culture management are key elements of this competency domain.

HR professionals need to know their business's niche — the customers, competitors, suppliers, investors and so on. There is a new focus on external stakeholders. HR needs to know who they are, how to build relationships with them, and how to use them to set criteria for effective people management. For example, customer expectations should inform and become criteria for hiring and promotion, performance management, training and development expectations and leadership behaviors.

HR professionals need to know the context within which their organization operates. They need to understand social, technological, economic, political, environmental and demographic (STEPED) trends and how they affect their respective industries and/or geographical

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regions. They need to translate their knowledge of the external environment and trends into internal action. It is no longer enough for HR to merely implement strategy created by others; HR must help co-create it by understanding emerging market opportunities.

Being a Strategic Positioner remains a core driver of personal HR effectiveness and using HR to serve key stakeholders and to drive business results. ●

Becoming a Paradox Navigator

No competency domain has a stronger impact on business performance than that of Paradox Navigator. Being an excellent Paradox Navigator may not change how people view HR's overall effectiveness, and it may not directly affect the perceived value HR professionals create for stakeholders, but it does seem to relate to business performance.

Organizations have to be agile to survive. Creating agile organizations requires navigating paradox. Without the debates and dialogues that paradoxical thinking encourages, change is less likely to happen. Navigating paradox accepts and heightens disagreements that enable organizations to change and evolve.

The term "navigating" is chosen rather than "managing" since navigation implies constantly steering and adjusting more than the disciplines of managing, which implies controlling and administering. To survive the four forces of change, organizations have to adjust to change. Such organizational adaptability comes from navigating paradox.

Tensions described by participants in research include centralization versus decentralization, globalization versus localization and freedom versus control. These are clearly paradoxes at work in organizational life.

What Is a Paradox Navigator?

Employees prefer clarity over ambiguity. In the absence of very clear information, employees interpret what is expected of them and do the best with what they have. A Paradox Navigator may force them to face the ambiguities that they have reconciled or address issues that they have implicitly ignored. This may cause them to feel unusual unease and tension in their work. While employees may benefit greatly from being challenged in this way, they may not fully appreciate the challenge and the associated work required.

Some meetings are divergent, focused on generative brainstorming for creative ways to solve a problem. These meetings can last for hours. When the solution needs to come quickly, a Paradox Navigator steps in and stops

the divergent conversation and regrounds the group in practical timelines, though he or she may pay a personal price among his or her peers for deciding to step in and cut back the idea generation.

The opposite also happens. People quickly converge on a solution and agree to move forward without fully considering the embedded tensions and challenges in the decision. In this case, a Paradox Navigator will step in to encourage disparate thought and challenge the status quo. This person may bring up uncomfortable issues that the team has conveniently ignored and force the team to diverge in thought and process. While we may not like that person, we frequently benefit from the opportunity to look differently at important issues when we might have converged too quickly.

How Does One Transcend Paradox?

HR professionals should be able to assess where their organization is relative to navigating paradox. There are some simple and practical steps any HR leader can take to become more comfortable confronting this reality.

Clarify the poles of the paradox: Articulate why both outcomes are important and how they are in tension with each other. Taking the time to clarify the seemingly opposing poles of a paradox and how they relate to each other can provide an important first step toward navigating that paradox.

Define the best outcomes: Explore how the opposing sides of the paradox relate to your criteria for business success to help clarify when to emphasize one or the other side of the paradox.

Try to understand how others experience the paradox in question: Lay out alternatives with pros and cons for each pole. Try reverse role-playing in which advocates of one pole argue for the other.

Find common ground between opposing views: Avoid situations in which a 20 percent disagreement takes up 80 percent of the discussion.

Take small steps forward and learn as you go: Plan for adjustments to the plan, know when you have moved too far and try to establish enough common ground to embrace the paradox together. ●

Strategic Enablers

One of the long-standing paradoxes in the HR profession is strategic (or transformational) versus foundational (or transactional) work. Many in HR continue to advocate that HR should move from transactional to transformational work. Consistent with the rationale of navigating paradox,

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we believe that effective HR professionals must manage both strategic and foundational HR work.

First Strategic Enabler: Culture and Change Champion

Culture is the identity of the firm in the minds of key customers and made real to employees. It is not enough to have a culture representing values — one must have the right culture comprising an identity. As such, culture must be the norms, behaviors and values *that will induce targeted customers to have a more intense relationship with the firm.*

We selected the term “champion” because the senior business leaders are primarily responsible for culture and change, but top HR professionals champion ideas by observing what is happening, envisioning what should happen and proposing action steps to make the right things happen.

Integrated HR Practices

What line managers and employees overwhelmingly want from HR departments is an integration of its practices around its culture and core competencies. The following four steps can be followed to create and deliver a clean set of integrated HR practices:

Step 1: Differentiate between corporate and business strategy. Corporate strategy asks the question, “Where do we compete?” Business strategy asks the question, “How do we compete in the context of our business environment?”

Step 2: Identify the culture that is required for your firm to win its customers’ hearts and wallets. As a perceived construct, culture may be defined as the identity of the firm in the minds of its key customers. A firm must then ensure that the desired customer perceptions are reflected in employee behaviors. Hire people who fit culture, not just technical skills, then train them with culture in mind. Reward behaviors that reflect customer promises.

Step 3: Clarify the required technical competencies. Competitive advantage is created not by having technical competencies but by how they are created and leveraged in the context of an organization’s culture.

Step 4: Design and implement HR practices and policies. With the organizational categories of HR practices and policies in place, you may then ask specific questions about the alignment of those practices with cultural requirements.

Second Strategic Enabler: Human Capital Curator

Although we focus heavily on “victory through organization,” talent still matters. Human Capital Curator

is the most important competency for creating value for line managers because line managers bear the cost of the absence of key talent and benefit directly from having high-quality human capital within their organizations.

Increasingly, people’s differences are being recognized and woven into talent choices. While organizations are customizing their human capital practices to these differences, they are also discovering that employees have an almost universal need to find meaning and purpose from work. Finding such meaning goes beyond free food and worker-friendly policies to doing work that makes a difference, involving employees in work decisions and creating work communities with positive relationships.

Employee involvement or empowerment programs enable employees to make decisions and take action based on minimal supervisory oversight or approval. Empowered employees can salvage a potentially negative experience and elevate themselves to hero status. In the era of social media, such “wows!” can be multiplied thousands of times over; the reverse can also be the case when employees are not empowered.

Employee development occurs through feedback and coaching. The first level of feedback and coaching is from individuals themselves. Do they learn from their mistakes and do they build on their successes? They may then learn and receive coaching from their team members through direct conversations and elicited feedback. They may learn and receive coaching from their boss, from their internal clients and finally, and perhaps most importantly, they can learn from the company’s customers.

The trend for a Human Capital Curator is to ensure that a positive conversation occurs between employees and their bosses. A positive performance conversation focuses on three parts: helping understanding, which makes a manager more a coach than controller; the data, which highlight what worked and what did not work; and fixing the problem, which focuses on future outcomes. These conversations encourage opportunity not punishment, yet hold individuals accountable for achieving results.

Companies are experimenting with different avenues through which to connect customers to employees, such as locating employees in the customers’ facilities, having customers visit the company’s site, arranging for employees to spend time with customers as they use your products, engaging employees in market research efforts, having customers participate in employee training courses, having employees listen to customer service phone calls, and having employees summarize company references on social media.

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Become a Better Human Capital Curator

A Human Capital Curator does not impose values but helps others define their values and reach their goals.

While the talent systems create organization capabilities, the people who are affected by the systems need to be at the heart of HR work.

Traditionally, employees move from individual contributor into management. However, participants in training programs were asked if they prefer a managerial or technical career track, and the answer was about a 50–50 split. Human Capital Curators help employees make informed career choices and offer technical as well as managerial career tracks.

Help all employees have opportunities to reach their desired potential, but treat employees differently depending on how they perform. Help employees feel like they personally matter to you and to the organization.

Third Strategic Enabler: Total Rewards Steward

Rewards are an integral part of HR solutions. Rewards may not drive performance, but they signal what matters and they reinforce the behaviors.

Compensation systems have two primary purposes: to attract people to join, and then to motivate them to perform. For awards to be effective, they should be: available, linked to performance, visible, timely, reversible and valued by the receiver.

Financial rewards weakly meet these criteria. Non-financial rewards, such as time off and travel, have shown inconsistent motivating potential. Engaging rewards, such as granting a voice in decision-making, are more effective. When people are given challenging responsibilities, autonomy to control their outputs, participation in decision-making, and visible and valuable recognition, it meets virtually all of the criteria for effective rewards.

Total Rewards Stewards can help business leaders use nonfinancial levers to capture employees' passion or well-being. More meaningful nonfinancial rewards come when employees meld their identity to the job, find purpose from the work, build relationships and have control over their work setting. ●

Foundation Enablers

First Foundation Enabler: Compliance Manager

While most do not aspire to an HR career as compliance managers, this work has to be done and done well.

HR professionals should avoid two extremes of compliance management. On the one hand, they should avoid being the policy police — paper pushers and compliance officers who control behavior by fiat and whose primary focus is on what *cannot* be done.

On the other hand, HR professionals cannot ignore regulation and policy. Regulations are generally issued to upgrade the quality of employee life and organization work environment in areas of discrimination, health and safety, and fair treatment.

Compliance often carries with it a negative connotation, especially when considered in the HR context. But appropriate policy compliance is like making the trains run on time. It is about protecting employee rights and being a liaison between employees and management.

Be aware of current and emerging regulation and anticipate its consequences. While few HR professionals are regulatory experts, they can access this expertise. Be transparent about what is happening by holding regulation forums with business leaders and employees.

Compliance management is the heritage of the HR profession that must be carried forward for the profession to gain legitimacy and the opportunity for more strategic work. Getting compliance management right may not directly increase business results or stakeholder value, but it enables these conversations to be held without distraction.

Second Foundation Enabler: Analytics Designer and Integrator

Over the last decade, “analytics” has become a widespread buzzword in HR and an increasingly important concept for HR's future. The underlying agenda of these efforts is to access and use information to make better decisions.

The main value of HR's role relative to analytics is not the application of analytics to the HR department but HR's role in helping apply analytics to the rest of the organization as a part of an overall information strategy.

A primary challenge in information management is how to identify patterns that can be applied to decision-making. The mechanisms for identifying information patterns depend on the types of information being accessed and analyzed.

Unstructured information is unstable and unpredictable. Its patterns are difficult to identify, and its interpretation is problematic. *Socially based* unstructured information exists in the form of hallway conversations, social networks, phone calls and debates in meetings. HR departments may play a potentially central role in creating a social mechanism by which socially based unstructured information is created, shared and utilized.

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To evaluate the reliability and validity of a proposal or practice, you need to seek evidence. Focus analytics on defining business outcomes and then showing how HR investments will impact those outcomes. Use data to create information that informs choices. Effective HR departments may contribute in each of these steps:

Help the firm *identify* and focus on the most important sources of external information. You don't have to be an expert in market analysis, but you can ask simple, critical questions, such as, "How do we segment our markets?" and "How do we access the most important information?"

Ensure that the most important information is *imported* into the firm and that the less important information is filtered out.

Analyze the information in innovative ways that result in key insights. HR can play an obvious role in championing the importance of hiring and utilizing data specialists who analyze the ongoing stream of information.

Disseminate information by structuring town halls in which market and other information is widely communicated; facilitating specific interactions that result in collaborative insights; and hiring, promoting and retaining people on the basis of their ability to share information.

Finally, these practices have little impact unless information is finally used in improved decision making. HR departments can encourage the *utilization* of information by including it in behavior-based performance evaluations.

Third Foundation Enabler: The Technology and Media Integrator

Technology is dramatically changing how people live and organizations operate. The pace of change in the information environment based on technological advance has dramatically affected business models and HR practices.

In recent years, Human Resource Information Systems (HRIS) have been evolving through four phases.

First, HR technology is used to design and deliver HR practices more efficiently. Employees become responsible for accessing and integrating HR solutions.

In Phase 2 HR technology enables transparency and sharing of information. Employee skills are public domain and companies may approach them without their applying for work.

In Phase 3, HR technology encourages connections by involving more people in decision making and by facilitating collaboration.

Finally, in Phase 4, HR technologies shift toward an experience economy where employees and customers

don't just want information, but the opportunity to create emotional experiences from technology connections. Technology broadens access to experiences and magnifies the experiences through sharing them.

Applying the four-phase emerging trends logic from technology to social media offers HR professionals a glimpse into how to create value from social media work.

First, social media more efficiently connects employees inside with those outside the organization.

Second, social media allows for more transparency of marketplace message. Social media sites get the right information to the right people in ways that work for them.

Third, social media sites build connections among many groups. Social media enables networks to quickly form focus groups who evaluate a new product or service.

Fourth, social media sites may shape an external experience, defined as reputation and brand, of the organization. As customers post their experiences with a firm's products or services on Instagram and elsewhere, the firm can recognize the experiences they are offering customers.

As HR professionals understand these trends, they are better able to provide insights that deliver value to key stakeholders and business results. ●

Now What?

The HR profession is vibrant and evolving. Business leaders are not HR professionals, but business leaders' success requires the insights HR has to offer. HR leaders are sought after to be on boards of directors. HR no longer advocates just to "be at the table" of business dialogue but now delivers real value to these discussions. Never forget, HR is not about HR but about delivering real value to the business. ●

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