

[A LETTER FROM THE TEAM]

Valerie wishes you all well from Mexico. But while she is on vacation, the newsletter marches on. Here is the latest from the trenches.

HR: Heavily Recruited? Highly Respected? Yes...and No.

Dear Friends:

Did you know that, after years of being overlooked and undervalued, you are suddenly in a hip, happening, white-hot-center-of-the-universe profession? So says the Wall Street Journal, and you'll get no argument from us. "For top-level HR talent, this is a seller's market," said the Journal in a recent article. "There is a large and growing gap between supply and demand." And the facts certainly back it up. Salaries are rising (though perhaps not quite to the levels touted by the Journal, which stated that Fortune 200 companies are willing to pay top-level HR talent as much as \$800,000 or \$900,000 a year!). It's also becoming harder to get into the top international Master's degree programs for HR; the number of applicants to the London School of Economics' HRM program, for instance, more than doubled last year. And major publications such as the *Journal* and the *Harvard Business Review* are taking notice: In addition to the article in the *Journal*, HBR wrote this month about Harvard MBAs looking to take the HR path to the top. Click here for Matthew D. Breitfelder and Daisy Wademan Dowling's *Why Did We Ever Go Into HR?*.

Why all the sudden interest in HR? Because now, finally, business is starting to realize the value of having an efficient, strategic HR function and getting the right people on board to drive it.

With apologies to Virginia Slims, you've come a long way, baby. HR, originally created to deal with unions at a time when the relationship between management and labor was largely conflict-based, has long been about as glamorous as a granny in a mu-mu. But with the stagflation crisis of the 1970s and the structural changes in the labor market in the 1980s, HR's role significantly changed. The shift to the professional-services and technology industries (especially in Silicon Valley) led to the decline of unions and created demand for a different type of workforce—and a different type of relationship between management and employees. HR's new role involved figuring out how to bring everybody to the same side of the table, which meant learning to treat employees as individuals. The best HR people managed to not only deal with that transition successfully, but also to reposition HR as a strategic business function that should be regarded on par with finance and marketing.

Unfortunately, though regard for the HR function and its high-level executives has grown, the same can't be said for HR professionals below the top tier. These days, with demand at the executive level outstripping supply, more and more organizations are tapping execs from other departments or hiring high-level OD consultants with no previous HR experience to be their VPHRs. (When have you ever heard of that in finance or marketing?)

What does this mean? It means that the traditional HR career path still makes it hard for HR professionals to develop the skills needed to reach the top. Organizations expect their HR departments to make strategic contributions, but instead of giving them the resources necessary to do so, outsiders are brought in to work their strategic "magic"—which creates an unlevel playing field for HR pros who love their jobs and have plenty of good ideas, but who don't have the resources they need to develop their strategic skills.

The best solution to this is to start instilling a strategic mindset throughout the department, starting with entry-level HR professionals. Typically, entry-level HR positions are strictly operational; unless a junior staffer is lucky enough to have a great mentor, he or she will rarely have the opportunity to develop skills that go beyond the operational side of HR. Which begs the question, Why aren't there HR associate or HR analyst positions at most companies, when all of the other business functions have those sorts of entry-level positions? Even though non-HR entry-level hires are usually assigned specific operational tasks, it's made clear to them from the outset that, if they want to add the sort of value that can get them to the top, they need to understand how the business works and spend some of their time focusing on the big picture.

Revamping the HR function to be more strategy-oriented is a decision that has to come from the top, of course. But to sustain this effort long term, executives and HR leaders alike need to look at how this goal can be reflected in their org charts. In other words, it's time for companies to practice what they preach and start thinking more strategically about their own HR talent.

Take care,
The VF&Co Team

Ask Valerie

Dear Valerie:

I am looking at reducing employee burnout by helping people get a better handle on their work/life balance. Do you have any suggestions?

- Working hard on employee commitment

[Response texted from Mexico]

Dear Hard Worker:

Can't talk – on vacation. Does that answer ur q?

- Valerie

[VF&Co HR On Demand](#)

Would you like to have access to an at-a-glance feature of HR professionals who are pre-screened, pre-interviewed, highly motivated, and ready to go? VF&Co's new HR On Demand is an executive placement service offering access to the best HR professionals we've found worldwide. Check our website for updated profiles on a variety of candidates from Human Resource Managers and Vice Presidents of Human Resources to specialists in the areas of compensation, benefits, and M&A.

[Human Resources Search Opportunities](#)

Human Resources Executive Positions

Director of Human Resources (Santa Clara, CA)

A global publicly-traded semiconductor company is seeking a worldwide Director of HR responsible for HR Operations on a global basis, including compensation and benefits, M&A, and staffing process and strategy. Email your resume in MS Word format to recruiting.

Director of Human Resources, Office of the CTO (Espoo, Finland)
International mobile technology and networking company seeks a highly strategic person for its world-renowned research center. Email your resume in MS Word format to recruiting.

Human Resources and Office Manager (San Mateo, CA)
Dynamic biopharma company needs an HR/Office Manager. The candidate who fills this newly created position will become a key member of the general and administrative team, responsible for vital daily human resource tasks. Email your resume in MS Word format to recruiting.

Manager of Human Resources (Palo Alto, CA)
One of the largest global law firms is seeking a Human Resources Manager to support the Director of Human Resources. Supporting the Palo Alto office, future plans for this position include supporting an office in Sacramento, CA and Seattle, WA. Email your resume in MS Word format to recruiting.

Senior Staffing Manager (Redwood City, CA)
This philanthropic investment firm is looking for a full-cycle recruiter with experience across all industries and desire for long-term growth within this growing company. Email your resume in MS word to recruiting.

Compensation Search Opportunities

Director of Global Benefits (San Francisco, CA)
Large, privately held insurance firm on the West Coast and ranked among the top insurance brokers in the nation. Email your resume in MS Word format to recruiting.

Director of Compensation/Chief of Staff, Americas (San Jose, CA)
A global, leading provider of Electronics Manufacturing Services (EMS), is seeking a Director of Compensation for the Americas with worldwide responsibilities. This person will provide strategic and tactical execution for the Americas, in addition to leadership, planning, and supervision to the Compensation Managers in the United States, Canada, and Mexico. Email your resume in MS Word format to recruiting.

Compensation and HRIS Analyst (San Jose, CA)
Fast growing, huge, global hardware company. Email your resume in MS Word format to recruiting.

Executive Compensation Manager (San Francisco, CA)
Successful growing software and programming company seeking experienced Manager of Executive Compensation. Email resume in MS Word format to recruiting.

Senior Compensation Analyst (San Francisco, CA)
Technically savvy, Senior Compensation Analyst needed for this 3,000 employee, growing global software company. Email resume in MS Word format to recruiting.

HR Manager Contracting (Santa Clara, CA)

Global, high tech company needs HR Manager contractor with payroll and performance appraisal management experience. Email resume in MS Word format to recruiting.

Compensation Consultant (Fremont, CA)

Global semiconductor company needs a compensation consultant who specializes in Radford matching and compensation ladder creating and implementation. Email resume in MS Word format to recruiting.

Industry Events

HR Star Conference – San Francisco

July 16th, 2008, all day event – South San Francisco Conference Center, California

Valerie Frederickson will present The Emerging Role of the Strategic HR Business Partner during this one-day free conference. VF&Co will also be hosting a luncheon and a panel of HR executives from companies like Blueshield, Celerity, OpenTV, Williams-Sonoma, H&R Block, Trianz, and Foundry Networks.

NCHRA Annual Conference – HR West

September 15th to September 16th, 2008 - Oakland, California

Valerie Frederickson will present The Emerging Role of the HR Business Partner at the annual NCHRA conference in Oakland. This conference is a large gathering of HR professionals from Northern California offering an opportunity to network and learn from some of the foremost HR presenters and practitioners. Keynote speakers include Oren Harari, Tamsin Smith, and Chip Conley.

BIO 2008 Human Resources Conference

October 26th to October 28th, 2008 - San Diego, California

Valerie Frederickson will present Your HR Career at this conference designed to engage HR professionals in biotech. The focus of this year's conference is "Taking Care of Business, Taking Care of People: Maximizing HR's Effectiveness." Sessions at the conference will examine the expertise required in this industry of the HR function to effectively meet new expectations and address HR issues and challenges specific to the biotechnology industry.