

# SHRM's Former CEO on HR Having a "Seat at the Table"

For six years, Sue Meisinger served as president & CEO of the Society for Human Resource Management ("SHRM"), the world's largest HR organization. She now consults on human resource management and writes a column on HR leadership for [Human Resource Executive Online](#).

In my interview of her, which can be read in full [here](#), Meisinger weighs in on HR's complaint of not getting a "seat at the table."

Jathan Janove: Is this complaint valid?

Sue Meisinger: No, it misses the mark. HR is not *entitled* to a seat at the executive leadership table. It has to *earn* it. Just like everybody else at that table, HR has to demonstrate its value to the business.

JJ: You work with business leaders. What's their most frequent complaint about HR?

SM: Executives tell me, "HR doesn't understand our business. They don't know our strategy, objectives and financial picture. They don't focus on what generates revenue and profits, and what impacts business value. They're more focused on their budgets."

JJ: What should HR do?

SM: Develop business literacy. If your background is in HR, strive to increase your knowledge about how your business operates. Make it a point to be able to comprehend your company's financial statements and what impacts them the most.

JJ: What should you do if you're in HR and don't feel you're properly respected by company leaders?

SM: If you don't feel you're getting the respect you deserve, look in the mirror. Start with a self-assessment. Perhaps you lack knowledge or understanding of the business. Perhaps your manner of interacting with others needs improvement. Perhaps you haven't done a good job conveying HR's value proposition to company leadership.

JJ: How might HR professionals demonstrate their value to the company executives?

SM: (1) Create and implement a human resources business strategy. (2) Align employee compensation with that strategy, including incentivizing behavior that's needed for business success. (3) Develop an approach to recruitment and retention that zeroes in on the human talent needed now and, through effective succession planning, will be needed in the future.