

# Do you have the 3 skills necessary to be an effective HR Business Partner?



Professionals often choose a Human Resources (HR) career track because they truly "enjoy people." This is a great trait to have for an HR professional. However, it's not the only one needed to be successful. A concern for people and excellent technical knowledge will only get you so far if you don't have the soft skills needed to be successful.

An HR Business Partner (HRBP) often works with managers and teams to help them meet challenging organizational goals and tackle tough obstacles. In this case, you need more just than an affinity for "people." You'll need facilitation skills, powerful tools, and effective communication to prove yourself as a valuable partner and asset who can get buy-in from even the toughest crowds.

## Facilitating discussions is key

One core competency that can make or break your reputation as a value-add HR Business Partner is related to your ability to facilitate. This is a requirement for success. In meetings, one on ones, or when working across functions, facilitation is key in this role. Demonstrating 'good facilitation' skills doesn't necessarily mean that you're considered a stellar presenter, orator, or trainer. Facilitation refers to your ability to bring people together, focused on an over-arching goal, and help them share their diverse points of view without judgment, then culminate in an agreeable outcome or decision. The interpersonal acumen that is observed in effective facilitators include the following:

- Listening with an open mind.
- Articulating differences between people as well as highlighting their common ground.
- Getting to the core of an issue or problem.
- Summarizing accurately and succinctly.
- Helping people brainstorm ideas for solutions.
- Assisting the team to narrow down “best fit” approaches to address the pending issue.

Harnessing the *art* of facilitation and demonstrating talent in this area will result in leaders, managers, and individual contributors seeking you out to help them attack difficult situations.

## **Use the tools at your disposal**

**Consider leveraging some of the tools available to you such as:**

- The Ishikawa Fishbone Root Cause Analysis diagram.
- Cost-benefit comparison method.
- SWOT analysis (identifying Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats).
- Role Clarification conversations.
- Brainstorming guidelines.
- Force Field analysis.

The only way to get comfortable with any of these tools is to try them out. *Start small*. Choose one or two of the most applicable to your work environment, your industry, and the issues that arise.

Even those who graduate with MBA’s or Master’s degrees in Organizational Development often finish their education but then don’t actually apply these problem-solving facilitation techniques in their workplace. If we don’t use what we’ve learned, unfortunately, that knowledge falls to the curb. But let’s be clear — you don’t need to get an MBA or Master’s degree to become adept at using these tools. Seek out opportunities, read about each one, and find someone in your organization who has the knowledge and who uses at least one of them.

## **Communicate effectively**

A second ingredient observed in high-performing HR Business Partners, who are greatly valued by their employers, is communication. How effectively can they communicate and translate organizational changes and important HR-related information to their client groups? They should be able to distill the core message that links directly to their audience.

Leaders, teams, and employees at every level appreciate it when an HRBP takes the time to do this pre-work, rather than go to a meeting and dump all the information in the whole PowerPoint. Much of the included information may not be relevant or useful to the whole group. Doing this planning before communicating is a good use of time and will increase your HRBP credibility. This will be noticed and appreciated by leaders in your client group. If you’re thinking it’s not worth the time, *think again!*

## **Skills for success**

There are a lot of other skills, knowledge, and abilities that successful HR Business Partners need to have. Organizing, implementing, and being seen as a trusted team player through the eyes of your peers will not only help with your credibility at work, but also improve your ability to get buy-in on initiatives.

It’s not just your knowledge of employment laws, hiring practices, or company policies and procedures that makes you valuable. After all, this knowledge in the hands of an ineffective communicator won’t do much good.

Be certain to focus on the softer skills needed to get the job done as well.