

# How to be viewed as a problem solver in HR



As a human resources professional, what is more important to your organization — your ability to innovate or your ability to solve problems? When it comes to measuring your effectiveness as an HR partner through the eyes of the leaders and employees you support, both skills are highly valued. Being perceived as a problem-solver who is also creative and innovative in finding “best fit” solutions will likely result in more frequent invitations to the decision-makers table.

**To be perceived as a problem-solver, these actions and behaviors are recommended with your client groups and leaders:**

In meetings, transition from negative energy in discussions to positive, constructive forward-thinking problem-solving. Everyone likes to complain occasionally, venting is healthy and cathartic. However, if most of what coworkers hear from you is complaints, you're likely to become known as a negative person instead of a problem solver.

Gather facts, data, and diverse views from team members; look for root causes of problems. Sometimes you have to go off a hunch, but when possible it's best to bring data and research to the table. Get diverse views and back your position with data to show you've thoroughly considered the factors involved.

Encourage brainstorming to surface as many ideas as possible, even those ‘far out.’ The first idea isn't always the best. If you just stop there you might miss out on some innovative solutions. Encourage brainstorming to see how many ideas you can come up with, then find the best solution. Perhaps each idea has some ups and

downs that can be combined into a winning concept.

Help find “common ground” between team members who may be in conflict. Everyone (in theory) has the same goal - to find a solution that best serves the organization's needs. However, when tensions get high it can be hard to remember that. Keep conflict productive and find the common ground in between to be seen as a facilitator and valuable team member.

Discuss how to blend ideas and find solutions that the whole group can buy into, and actually commit to implementing. You'll never get a new initiative off the ground without buy-in, so it's vital to highlight how each group involved will benefit and how this plan will be the best to achieve the goal.

Check to see that there is a solid agreement on how to move forward as a team. A long planning meeting is useless if you come out of it with halfhearted agreements and unclear next steps. Ensure there's a clearly laid out plan.

Define roles, responsibilities, and both short and long-term actions. This is a vital step, each participant needs to be held accountable for the actions they'll have to take.

Consider obstacles and specific approaches to overcome pitfalls. You must think forward and critically to be a valuable asset. Don't assume things will go perfectly smooth. Consider what likely obstacles are and plan how to overcome them. Others are likely to come up also, but at least you'll have addressed some of the more likely obstacles.

Facilitate agreement on timelines and checkpoints. Setting a tight deadline is no good if the employees responsible don't agree to it. Consider in-put and ensure that timelines are reasonable and attainable, even if they are sometimes tight.

**To be perceived as an HR innovator, these actions and behaviors are recommended with client groups and leaders:**

Encourage ‘out of the box’ thinking when issues or work problems arise. If the same-old solution was working, then you probably wouldn't be in the position you're in. Don't shoot down off-the-wall ideas or creative solutions, a new idea only seems crazy until it succeeds.

Regularly solicit organizational needs from client group leaders and individual contributors. There are always ongoing problems, but department and team leaders don't often bring them up until they peak. By regularly reaching out to identify concerns and problems, you get ahead of issues and can head them off before they become too serious. Management will appreciate the initiative.

Resist a rush to solution; instead, foster open dialogue (‘peel the onion’). Sometimes you need a quick solution, but that doesn't mean you need to jump on the first solution available. Spend at least an hour to think deeply on a concept — you can usually afford to spend a little more time before you jump to a conclusion.