

Putting the

“BP”

back in

HRBP:

Elevating HR's role
in the C-suite



Here's your gameplan for getting a seat at the strategic table

HR leaders have long sought a meaningful seat at the executive table, alongside CEOs, CFOs, and COOs. The term HR Business Partner (HRBP) aims to capture this ideal—positioning HR as an equal player in shaping business strategy. You, the HR leader, know you're sitting on a goldmine of insights about the company's most valuable asset: its people. You understand motivations, engagement levels, and the real pulse of the organization. Yet too often, you're left out of the critical strategic conversations and relegated to executing decisions made without your input—or worse, seen primarily as the keepers of compliance and paperwork. Bridging the gap between administrative demands and strategic influence can feel like a constant uphill battle, even when you've rebranded as “people operations.”

This isn't just about feeling valued; it's about fundamentally shifting HR's role from a support function to a strategic driver. Today's business landscape makes HR's strategic insight more critical than ever—talent, culture, and workforce agility are now recognized as key drivers of growth and innovation. In other words, **the people strategy is the business strategy**. So how can HR finally secure its place as a full-fledged strategic partner in the C-suite?

In this guide, we'll explore how to put the “BP” back in HRBP by redefining HR's role, overcoming internal roadblocks, and proving—through actions and data—that HR belongs in the company's highest conversations.

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The perception gap: Why HR isn’t always seen as strategic

Despite HR’s efforts, a stubborn perception gap persists between HR and the C-suite. Business leaders often undervalue HR’s contributions, seeing it primarily as a support function rather than a driver of results. Lattice’s 2024 State of People Strategy report found that only 27% of executives felt HR programs significantly drive revenue growth, yet 83% of HR leaders believe they improve productivity and performance. In other words, most CEOs and CFOs aren’t convinced HR moves the needle on the bottom line—even when HR teams are confident that they absolutely do.

Why does this gap exist? History plays a role. For decades, “personnel” departments were viewed more as administrative caretakers than strategic partners.

But there are also two key systemic barriers that many HR leaders and their departments face:

1. Administrative overload

Many HR teams spend the vast majority of their time on essential, but administrative, tasks: coordinating recruiting, processing onboarding, running payroll, managing benefits queries, and ensuring compliance. Even in more mature HR departments, needless coordination and manual workarounds consume valuable time and energy. While this work is critical, it can prevent HR from focusing on higher-level strategy.

2. Lack of relevant, quantitative people data

When the CEO asks for headcount data that aligns with finance, or wants to understand the real drivers of attrition, HR often defaults to qualitative insights. Without readily accessible, reliable, quantitative data to back up those insights, you risk looking unprepared or lacking business acumen in the eyes of data-driven executives. Getting that data is often a nightmare—wrestling with spreadsheets, begging for time from internal data teams, or dealing with systems that just don’t talk to each other.

Compounding this issue, HR often measures success in HR terms (like engagement scores or time-to-hire) rather than translating people initiatives into business KPIs that the C-suite cares about. If an HR initiative can’t be explicitly linked to revenue, customer satisfaction, or growth, busy executives may overlook it. So while the main barrier here is a lack of data, it’s also impacted by miscommunication and misalignment.

Reclaiming your seat: Strategies to elevate HR’s impact

Elevating HR’s role means translating your people expertise into the language of business outcomes—the language your C-suite colleagues understand and value. Here are five strategies for HR leaders.

1. Become an industry expert

HR leaders elevate their impact by becoming experts in their company’s business and industry—you can’t influence strategic decisions if you only speak HR.

Study your organization’s financial drivers, market trends, and competitive landscape. When you understand how the company makes money and where it’s headed, you gain credibility with the C-suite and can tie HR initiatives directly to business outcomes.

Surveys show that many HR teams struggle here—only 28% of HR professionals feel they tightly connect HR planning to business strategy.

Close that gap by immersing yourself in the business: Sit in on sales and strategy meetings, review quarterly reports, and learn other departments’ pain points. The more fluent you are in business priorities, the more value you’ll bring to every conversation.



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✔ **DO YOUR HOMEWORK:**

Regularly read up on your company’s performance reports and industry news. Identify key revenue streams, customer segments, and challenges the business faces. Up-to-date industry knowledge and business acumen allow you to anticipate needs and propose people strategies that fit the context.

✔ **TALK TO BUSINESS LEADERS:**

Schedule coffee chats or brief meetings with leaders in finance, operations, and other areas. Ask them about their goals and hurdles. By understanding their world, you can tailor HR solutions (like staffing plans or training programs) that directly support their objectives. These conversations also show that HR is proactively interested in driving the business, not just enforcing policies.

✔ **INVEST IN YOUR DEVELOPMENT:**

Consider training that boosts your strategic and financial skills as an HR professional. Attending workshops or courses on business strategy for HR, reading books on your industry, or even having a mentor in another business function can sharpen your ability to think like a business leader. Applying this knowledge in everyday decisions will signal to the executive team that you’re not only an HR expert but a savvy business advisor.



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2. Align people strategy with business goals

To reclaim a strategic seat, every HR initiative should clearly advance the organization’s top priorities. That means aligning your people strategy with business goals at every turn.

Start by knowing the company’s vision and objectives, then design HR programs to drive those outcomes.

For example, if the business is focused on accelerating product innovation, HR can fuel that by revamping hiring and development programs to attract creative talent and upskill current employees in innovation practices.

The key is to move beyond HR for HR’s sake—instead, show how HR efforts contribute to revenue growth, market expansion, cost savings, or whatever metrics define success for your organization. When you explicitly link HR initiatives to business KPIs, you demonstrate that HR is not just a support function but a critical driver of business results.

MAP HR INITIATIVES TO STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES:

List your company’s major goals (like entering a new market, improving customer satisfaction, or scaling operations) and map out how HR can contribute. This might mean aligning your talent acquisition strategy to acquire the right skills for expansion, focusing on engagement and retention if productivity and customer experience are priorities, or enhancing leadership capabilities to support scaling operations. For each business goal, identify at least one people-related initiative that will help achieve it.



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✔ **SET AND TRACK RELEVANT METRICS:**

Develop HR metrics that mirror business success. If one goal is increasing market share, for example, track recruiting speed for roles in growth areas or training hours in product innovation. Regularly review metrics alongside business results to show the correlation. By reporting that, say, a 15% increase in sales training hours coincided with a 10% boost in sales revenue, you make HR’s impact tangible.

✔ **COMMUNICATE THE ALIGNMENT:**

Don’t assume executives will automatically see the connection—make it explicit. In presentations and reports, frame HR projects in terms of business outcomes. You might say, “This leadership development program is designed to improve our store expansion success rate by building managers’ operational skills,” rather than just “We’re doing manager training.” By consistently framing HR work in the context of business goals, you reinforce your role as a business partner.



3. Cultivate influence through strategic relationships

Building strong relationships is a cornerstone of elevating HR’s role. To be seen as a true business partner, earn the trust of the C-suite and key stakeholders through ongoing collaboration and delivering results.

It’s not enough to just have great ideas—you need buy-in from other leaders to implement them. Start by engaging leaders across the organization: Listen to their challenges, offer help, and follow through on your promises.

When department heads view you as an ally who understands their world, they’ll invite you into more strategic discussions. Remember that influence in the C-suite often comes from credibility built over time. This means maintaining confidentiality, providing honest counsel, and even courageously challenging ideas when people implications are at stake (in a tactful way). Over time, your relationships will position you as a go-to advisor on organizational strategy, not just “the HR person.”

BE A PROACTIVE PARTNER:

Don’t wait for an invitation—attend business meetings and request a seat in planning sessions. For example, if the product team is strategizing a big launch, ask to join and contribute insights about staffing or change management. Proactively showing up where decisions are made demonstrates that HR is eager and able to contribute.

UNDERSTAND STAKEHOLDER NEEDS:

Use one-on-one meetings to ask senior leaders about their priorities and pain points. If the Head of Sales is worried about high turnover, dig deeper into the issue and come prepared with ideas (like a targeted retention plan or sales incentive redesign). Tailoring your support to each leader’s goals shows that you’re focused on solutions that matter to them.

✔ **DELIVER AND FOLLOW UP:**

Influence grows when you establish a track record. If you promise to provide an analysis or solve a problem, do it—and circle back to share the results. For example, if you agree to address a marketing team's hiring bottleneck, follow through by streamlining the process and follow up to report the improved time-to-hire. Consistently delivering results builds trust. Leaders will be more likely to seek your input on bigger strategic questions once they've seen you execute on smaller commitments.

✔ **LEVERAGE INFORMAL INTERACTIONS:**

Relationship-building doesn't only happen in formal meetings. Use everyday moments to connect with executives and managers—join them at lunch, partake in cross-functional projects, or simply check in with a quick call. These informal interactions humanize you beyond your HR title and can open doors to candid conversations where you can demonstrate insight and provide guidance. Building rapport in low-stakes moments makes it easier to collaborate when high-stakes issues arise.





4. Be a data-driven storyteller

In the C-suite, data is the language of credibility. HR leaders reclaim their strategic seat by backing their people insights with quantifiable data and weaving it into compelling narratives.

As an HRBP, strive to become a data-driven storyteller who uses evidence to influence decisions. This goes beyond reporting HR metrics; it means linking those metrics to business outcomes in a way that resonates with other leaders. For example, instead of just noting a low engagement score, tell a story: “Teams with higher engagement grew their sales 20% faster, showing that boosting engagement company-wide could directly drive revenue.”

A few more examples:

From cost center to value driver:

With freed-up time and powerful analytics, HR can shift the conversation. Instead of just reporting on attrition, you analyze its cost to the business and propose data-backed retention strategies targeting specific, high-risk groups.

Connecting people programs to profitability:

Instead of just launching a manager training program, you measure its impact on team productivity, engagement scores of high performers, or even sales metrics.

Proactive problem solving:

You spot trends—like burnout indicators correlating with increased overtime in a specific department—and partner with leaders to address them before they impact the bottom line. Or you identify which recruiters consistently source candidates who become top performers, optimizing your talent acquisition strategy.

When you connect the dots like this, executives see HR initiatives as solving business problems, not just “people problems.” But it’s crucial that you have accurate, timely data, which means leveraging modern HR technology that **unifies your workforce data** and provides real-time reporting, so you can quickly gather facts and spot trends across recruiting, turnover, performance, and more.

Research shows that HR professionals who effectively use analytics are **170% more likely to be high-impact contributors than those who don’t.**

In practice, this means using data to anticipate needs and make informed recommendations—essentially, becoming the voice of data-fueled insight in the boardroom.

Here’s how to tell a strategic story with HR data:

1 FRAME THE BUSINESS QUESTION:

Start with a pressing business issue or goal. For example, “How can we improve productivity in our customer support team?” or “What’s driving our engineering turnover?” Your analysis will be most effective if you start with a clear question that leadership cares about.

2 GATHER AND ANALYZE RELEVANT DATA:

Pull data from across the employee lifecycle to answer that question. This is where having **unified HR data** pays off. With Rippling, you can combine engagement survey results, performance scores, attrition rates, and more to look for patterns, trends, or correlations—for example, maybe top performers are leaving certain teams at a higher rate, or improved training attendance correlates with higher customer satisfaction scores.

3 FIND THE INSIGHT AND CRAFT THE NARRATIVE:

Interpret the data to find a clear insight or “ah-ha.” Build a narrative around why and how addressing the insight will benefit the business. Keep it concise and focused: Define the problem, reveal the data insight, and propose a data-backed solution. For example: “Our analysis shows new hires who don’t receive formal mentorship in their first 90 days are twice as likely to underperform. By launching a mentorship program, we can improve ramp-up productivity and potentially add an extra \$2M in sales next year.”

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4 PRESENT WITH VISUALS AND CLARITY:

When sharing with the C-suite, use clear charts or graphs to illustrate key data points, but don't let the data speak alone. Guide your audience through the story. Highlight the risk or opportunity uncovered and tie it to dollars, growth, or risk mitigation. By concluding with a compelling call to action (for example, “Investing in this people initiative could save us \$500K in turnover costs”), you make it easy for executives to grasp the value.

5 LEVERAGE AUTOMATION FOR AGILITY:

To keep up your data-driven momentum, automate wherever possible. Set up dashboards or reports that update automatically, so you're always ready with current data. Because Rippling is built on a single source of truth for employee data, it can automate data collection and reporting across HR, IT, finance, and third-party apps, giving you instant insights without hours of manual work. This means you can spend more time interpreting and strategizing, and less time wrestling with spreadsheets.

By becoming adept at data storytelling, you transform HR from a predominantly intuition-driven function into a trusted source of business intelligence. Leaders will come to you not just for “people issues,” but for understanding organizational health and forecasting workforce trends—exactly the role a strategic HRBP should play.





5. Embrace technology to amplify your impact

Strategic HR leaders make smart use of technology to multiply their effectiveness. Too often, HR’s strategic contributions are hampered by time-consuming administrative work. In fact, our [2025 State of HR report](#) found that 90% of HR teams spend more than a quarter of their day on repetitive administrative tasks, stealing time away from higher-value strategic work.

Our report also found that a staggering 82% of HR teams use four or more different tools each month, and over a third (36%) rely on seven or more. While each tool could be alleviating one specific problem, its inability to communicate with the other tools you work within creates significant downstream problems, as HR teams are forced to manually stitch together data, juggle multiple workstreams, and waste hours on duplicative work.

To reclaim your seat at the table, it’s critical to streamline, automate, and delegate these routine tasks. Embracing modern HR systems not only frees up your schedule, but also improves data accuracy and response time. The result is an HR function that runs with speed and precision, and automations that allow you to focus on strategic initiatives like leadership development, workforce planning, or culture transformation. In short, technology acts as a force multiplier for HR’s impact, allowing a small team (or even an HR team of one) to punch above its weight.



CUT DOWN ON YOUR TECH STACK:

Are you among the organizations using four, five, six, seven, or more tools each month? Consider whether an [all-in-one tool](#) could help you consolidate your tech stack—and potentially eliminate poorly integrated or redundant tools.



IMPLEMENT SMART AUTOMATION:

Leverage tools or platforms that can automate the heavy lifting, like automatically generating offer letters, syncing employee data changes to payroll and benefits, or handling time-off approvals with self-service workflows.

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The perception of HR as purely administrative or lacking strategic weight is outdated, but it won't change on its own. It requires using data—not just to report the past, but to shape the future strategy of your organization. It requires breaking free from the limitations imposed by legacy technology and embracing a new way of operating.

HR as a driver of business success

HR's evolution into a true business partner is no longer a lofty vision or even just an attainable goal—it's a business imperative. By focusing on business outcomes, leveraging data, streamlining processes, embracing technology, and building trust at the executive level, HR can shed its “administrative” label and emerge as a core driver of value.

When HR leaders challenge conventions, fix systemic issues that hold them back, and proactively champion people strategies that propel the company forward, they transform their function from a cost center into a value creator.

With the right approach, HR can and will earn its place as a trusted, strategic leader at the executive table.



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