

SO YOU WANT TO WORK IN HR?

A career in human resources can be incredibly challenging and rewarding, but also frustrating, hard work and sometimes downright depressing. In the first article in this series, Angela Atkins explores why you'd even consider an HR career and looks at different ways you can get into HR.

FIRST UP, I HAVE TO ADMIT

that I didn't choose HR as my career. In fact through school, university and in my first few jobs I didn't even know that HR existed! I fell into it completely by accident after taking a temporary filing job in an HR department. And having found it, I thought it sounded like a fantastic career. Little did I know what was in store for me.

I've written this article for those of you who have made a conscious choice you want to get into HR, with some suggestions of different paths you can take, and also to make sure you really consider whether HR is the career for you.

The good, the bad and the ugly

Lets start with the good news first. There are some great things about working in HR. You get to see how all parts of a company operate so you develop business acumen, you get to work on processes and projects that have an impact on your company performance by growing and developing employees and managers, and no week is ever the same because there are so many people issues that can come up!

BUT there are just as many bad and ugly parts of working in HR—having to be the perfect role model, working with uncooperative managers, being expected to fix everything, and having to dismiss or make people's roles redundant. Make sure you really consider the challenges first by talking to someone who works



in HR, or there is some further information in my book *Employment Bites*.

Different paths to HR

If I haven't put you off and you still think HR is the career for you, there are several paths you can take:

- **Non HR roles.** Yes this sounds strange but the first career path is actually to work in non HR roles and work your way up to being a team leader or having some HR responsibilities. You may then be able to transition into an HR advisor or consultant role rather than starting at entry level. You will need to have built up some fundamental HR skills, however, like recruitment and employment law knowledge.
- **Entry level HR roles.** There are a couple of types of entry level HR roles. In smaller companies (1000 employees or less) HR administrators or assistants normally help with recruitment admin, employment agreements, reporting, HR filing and paperwork to start and finish employees. In larger companies there is often a call centre type team who deal with HR enquiries from managers or employees on HR policies and procedures.
- **Recruitment consultant.** While recruitment is an area

of HR, recruitment consultant roles are often far more like sales people having to cold call HR people to build clients. And a warning here—many HR people will still only consider you for an entry level HR role after being a recruitment consultant because you have only dealt with one area of HR. A great alternative is to try and get a recruitment role in a large company that has an in-house recruitment team.

- **Technical trainers.** Learning and development is often part of the HR team so becoming a trainer can be a great way to build some transferrable skills. However, for many training roles you may need some operational or systems experience first.

Sign me up!

You're still keen? If you really want to head into an HR career, here is my advice on how to get your foot on the ladder.

Get some work experience. If you're an HR or management graduate without any work experience, you are going to be at a disadvantage to candidates who have worked in administration or sales or operational roles. I know many HR managers who prefer to employ people without an HR qualification if they have work experience

because those people already have some foundation computer and administration skills.

Make an effort with your CV and application. Check your spelling and grammar. Do a cover letter that actually says *why* you are interested in the role you are applying for. Get the name of the role correct. Make your CV easy to read with the relevant details. Don't have an email address of sexypants24@xxx. If you're unsure, get advice from your university career advisor or ask friends or family if they know anyone who works in recruitment or HR who can give you some advice.

Practise being interviewed with behavioural interview questions.

Go to HR networking events or training and introduce yourself to HR people. Have your elevator speech ready (a quick 30-second blurb about who you are and why you want a career in HR). Ask them if they know of any roles or if they have advice on where you can try.

Good luck! The next article in this series will look at what skills and experience you should be building when you get to an advisory level role! **et**



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