

“Most HR leaders don’t have what it takes to be the CEO’s sounding board...,” says Ram Charan.

Spot on or wide of the mark?

Hilda Stearn, Chartered Fellow CIP shares her thoughts on this statement after more than 30 years working with a wide range of very different organisations across many sectors.

Looking back on my working life so far I can definitely see where Sharan is coming from. When I began my career it was in **personnel** and I recall vividly a conversation with senior manager (in a local authority) who perceived my role to essentially be that of a holiday record keeper for his apprentices. My actual role was Training Officer which included responsibility for the day-to-day management of the council’s Youth Training Scheme (YTS) contract with the Manpower Services Commission. The council relied on this funding to help off-set the cost of running the apprenticeship programme. These were the early days of Compulsory Competitive Tendering (CCT) and budgets were beginning to be stretched. All this mattered little to a manager who was convinced that CCT was the best way to take advantage of the perceived benefits of privatisation: autonomy and an increased salary whilst ignoring the reality: accountability and the lack of job security. Fast forward a few years and **personnel** had become **human resources** and this made absolutely no impact on the council. Emperor’s new clothes and all that, pretty much summed it up.

As an active member of the (now) CIPD I served on the branch committee that witnessed the merger with the Institute of Training & Development (ITD), the attainment of chartered status for the Institute and the drive to encourage members to upgrade and ultimately became a Chartered Fellow myself. For me personally the most notable change came when I become a consultant following redundancy. I chose not to become an HR consultant but rather to continue to focus on the supportive role I believed HR needed to play to be relevant and sought-after. This has led me to create the **AppliedHR©** approach. It begins with the business agenda and assumes that those traditional **personnel/HR** operational functions around compliance are in place. These functions are very important and I am happy to let others with far greater expertise deliver them. My passion centres on the business strategy and plan and how people help or indeed hinder success. To me being what I call **business-savvy** is the real key to success for HR.

Business savvy

Whilst it may not be rocket science it is clear that there are certain attributes needed to deliver this approach. These include being able to explain the company’s business strategy and how HR supports its delivery which necessitates being grounded in business and not

A truly business savvy HR department will tick ALL the boxes (and be able to add some more statements). If you can't tick them all and you want HR to become a genuine. Continue the conversation: hilda.stearn@ministryforgrowth.co.uk or call 01494 565206.