
The Next Challenge:
From Human Resources Leader to
Human Capital Strategist



Helen Peters
and
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Forward

This White Paper reflects a new level of thinking in the profession of Human Resources leadership.

In 2005 we published our White Paper, "The New Standard in Human Resources Leadership." Since then we have had the privilege to share our ideas about HR leadership with hundreds of HR professionals and to further explore the role and impact of HR leadership with them. Our interactions with current HR leaders, future HR leaders, and leading edge thinkers in business and the "world of work" have caused our thinking on the topic of HR leadership to evolve and deepen. In this White Paper, we take our original HR leadership model and reframe it in the larger context of rapid global change and its impact on the competitive business environment.

*In **The Next Challenge**, we talk less about "human resources" and more about "human capital". Human Capital recognizes that the talent and creativity of individuals is the key to global competitiveness. The identification and development of talent - the number one priority for every organization - will pay exponential returns on investment in the near and long term.*

We started our original research in 2005 with the anticipated conclusion that HR as a profession might nearing extinction; our recognition today is the exact opposite.

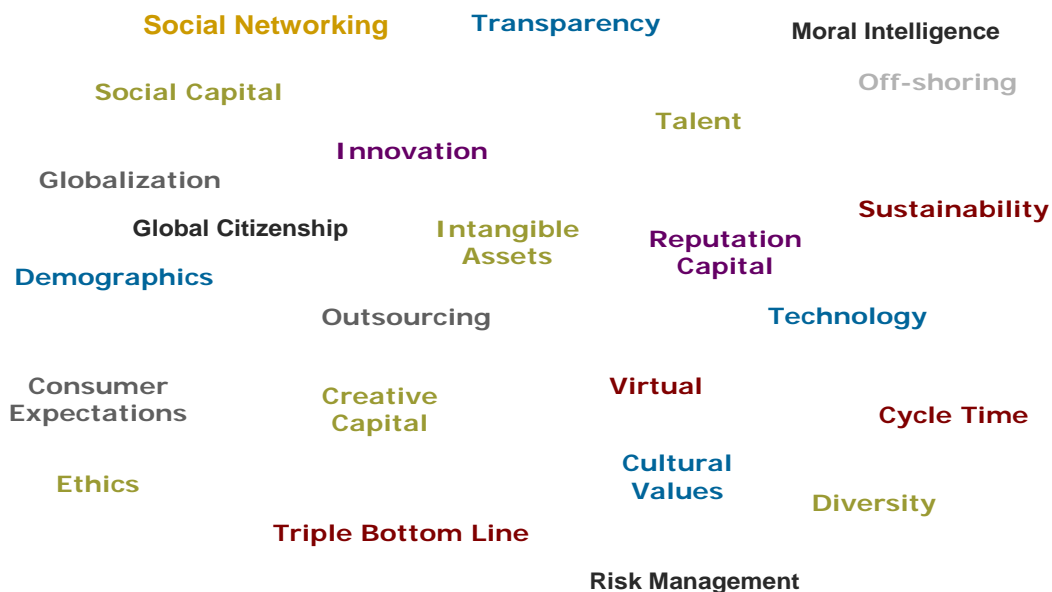
Join us as we take a fresh look at the HR leader's role and exciting challenges in the new millennium.

*Helen Peters
Deborah Saks
2008*

The Next Challenge: From Human Resources Leader to Human Capital Strategist

By Helen Peters and Deborah Saks

When we look around at the world we live in now vs. the one we lived in just ten years ago, the number of changes in our day-to-day lives is amazing. When we look at the larger global context, the number of factors at play and in flux is even harder for most of us to grasp. Global futurist James Canton tells us that there has been more change in the last fifty years than in the previous fifty thousand; and that the next fifty years will see even more radical changes in our world. The impact of technology advancements and globalization - and with them the emergence of a new Net Generation - has been a game changer for individuals and organizations.



Whatever your view of the future is, or your specific interests or concerns may be, from the organizational perspective one thing becomes immediately clear:

Human Capital - the unique capabilities and expertise of individuals - is directly in the eye of the global competitive storm.

In the opinion of Hal Johnson, "The new view of the workforce as the ultimate competitive advantage has emerged just as rapid change, globalization, and

highly competitive, risk-intensive markets have rendered that advantage more vital than ever.”

It stands to reason that successful Human Resources leaders of tomorrow will look significantly different than HR leaders of the past or the present. That is why our focus is on the future and the next generation of HR leaders. The question is simple, “How can today’s Human Resources professional become the Human Capital Strategist that can lead their organizations in the future?”

Our research indicates that there is no easy answer to that question. HR professionals who in the past tended to play the role of employee champion and corporate cheerleader often found themselves in direct conflict with the priorities and perspectives of other executive team members. HR professionals have been either denied a place, or felt out of place, at the executive level and in the Boardroom. This is largely due to that fact that for most HR professionals, their backgrounds, academic histories, and business experience have often differed dramatically from their peers.

This positioning meant that the HR function had not always been taken as seriously as it could or should have been. Even today in many organizations HR is *still* perceived as “overhead” whose key financial contribution is, at best, expense-cutting. In the worst cases, HR is perceived as a road block to getting things done. In the 1990’s, some HR gurus even declared the potential demise of the whole HR function.

In spite of its history, many HR leaders have remained determined to up their capabilities, credibility, and organizational standing. And some have done this very successfully. What are the missing pieces for those who haven’t been successful? And what other capabilities will the future demand? Our research has demonstrated that business acumen, strategic thinking capabilities, leadership agility, and a future forward view are some of the key ingredients to transforming the nature and the competitive importance of the HR leadership role and the profession it represents.

Evolution of the HR Profession

To understand the potential role the HR function can play in the organization, and the demands that will be placed on tomorrow’s HR leaders, it is important to look back at where we have come from. We have created a timeline summarizing the evolution of the HR profession. This timeline is not intended to be all-inclusive, but to remind us of the road we have traveled, to identify key strategic issues for the function, and to set the stage for fresh dialog and new thinking.

The shift in both the breadth and the complexity of HR's charter has generally been reflected by changes in the function's name and the title of the top job, from Personnel Manager to VP of HR to today's Chief Human Resource Officer (CHRO) and, we think, tomorrow's Human Capital Strategist. The purview of the function has morphed from administrative only to being a full participant in individual and organizational development and strategic change management.

Evolution of the HR Profession

60's – 70's	80's – 90's	2000 – 2010 +
Organization: Personnel Top Job: Personnel Manager Scope: National Metrics: Reporting	Organization: Human Resources Top Job: VP – HR Scope: International Metrics: Measuring/ROI	Organization: Human Resources Top Job: CHRO Scope: Global Metrics: Analysis/Modeling
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Management Training •Compensation & Benefits •Recruiting/Hiring •Union Relations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Leadership Development •Compensation & Benefits •Staffing/Right-size/Outsource •Employee/Labor Relations •Organization/Change Management •Talent Management •HRMS •Diversity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Leadership Capability •Compensation & Benefits •Staffing/Virtual/Off-shore •Culture and Values •Social Capital •Creative Capital •Techno-leverage •Demographics •Reputation Capital
Ulrich Model:	Ulrich Model:	New HC Strategist:
Employee Champion Administrative Expert	Strategic Partner Change Agent Employee Champion Administrative Expert	Business Professional Leader General Manager Human Capital Visionary

As you can see reading from the left hand column to the right hand column, the scope and impact of HR has continually expanded and moved up the strategic value chain of the organization.

What are the implications of the changing demands on the HR profession for the role of the HR leader? The answer to that question follows the long established work of Dave Ulrich, Jac Fitz-ens, and others. But it also makes a clear break into new territory - this is not a matter of linear evolution but of discontinuous change.

When we combined our own experience in Human Resources and business management with recent research, a survey of top HR executive recruiters, discussions with HR thought leaders, and conversations with hundreds of successful senior HR practitioners, a new charter for the HR leader emerged. As we describe what we see that new charter to be, note that we are not as

much concerned with how to “do” HR, as with how to “lead” HR, how to help our organizations and the individuals who work in them to be future ready.

You may have noted that our timeline ends at 2010, just two years away. That’s because we believe that change is now happening so quickly and in such challenging, and often conflicting, new directions, that our ability to see beyond that point is limited. We repeat, this is no longer a linear projectory. The growth and convergence of information technology, bio technology, nano technology and neuro technology is radically reshaping our world. And, the HC Strategist will be best positioned to stay ahead of these unprecedented changes.

Beyond those givens, here are just a few of the other U.S workforce forecasts from futurist James Canton that will impact the world of work:

- Workforce shortages will be highest among managers and skilled employees in tech, science, and other innovation and service jobs
- Total projected skilled and unskilled labor shortage may be as high as 10 million in 2010
- There may be fourteen million more jobs than workers to fill them by 2015
- The lack of Future-Readiness of the US workforce due to low high-tech skills will restrict the competitiveness of US corporations
- America’s global leadership will be significantly reduced if workplace needs for skilled talent are not met effectively
- The search for innovation-skilled talent will drive global outsourcing
- New entrants into the workforce will be dominated by women and minorities, especially Hispanic Americans, by 2020
- By 2025 the ratio of women to men in the workforce will be 2:1
- By 2025 60% of individuals in the workforce will be robots

Canton predicts jobs of the future which include gene engineers, robotic psychologists, holographic game developers, space market planners and personal identity finders; roles few of us can imagine and even fewer are prepared for.

Other futurists, such as Mary O’Hara-Devereaux, are predicting new resilient organizational models that much more resemble webs that will weave

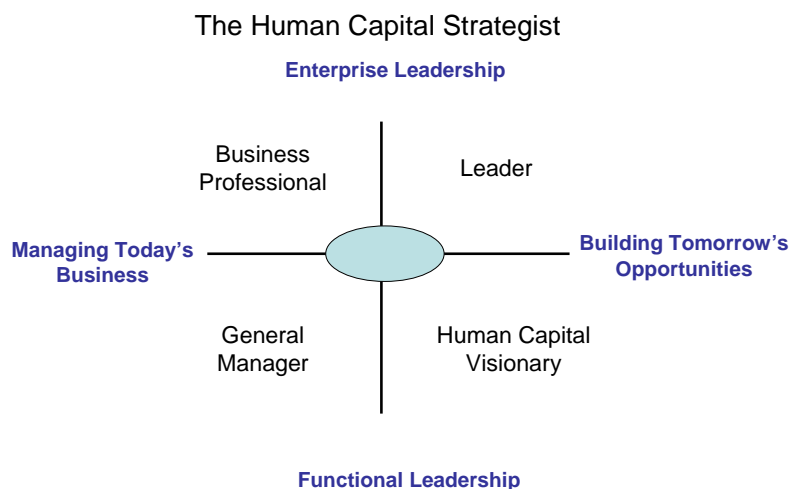
themselves, as opposed to the hierarchical structures that we have been accustomed to. Don Tapscott predicts that “Enterprise 2.0” - open, networked collaboration-based organizations - will be the norm.

Employment will be restructured with completely new terms of engagement, and a premium will be placed on what economist Richard Florida calls the “creative class”. These individuals will decide where they want to live *first*, and then decide who they want to work for. These and other changes are already impacting organizations, and will continue to increase the need to rethink the ways organizations will be designed and how talent will be leveraged. As O’Hare-Devereaux correctly observes, “The future is already here, it just isn’t evenly distributed.”

The Role of the Human Capital Strategist

We believe that the **Human Capital Strategist** is the new organizational role for HR leaders. It requires that we re-imagine, re-craft and re-shape what we focus on to meet the demands of a world that is characterized by blinding speed, quantum leaps of complexity, new and more risks, drastic change, and surprise as a daily feature of life. We personally need to be future-ready, and ready to point the way for our organizations.

The Human Capital Strategist role has four key components: Business Professional, Leader, General Manager, and Human Capital Visionary.



The horizontal axis of the model recognizes the need for leaders to manage today’s business while simultaneously fulfilling expectations for future growth. The vertical access represents the need to both represent the Human Resources function and to balance functional requirements against the larger enterprise mission and needs.

The left side of the model represents the elements of the leadership role which have a more internal and near term focus. Here the emphasis is on such issues as quarterly earnings growth, efficiency, risk reduction, and resource maximization.

The right side of the model explores the more external and future focused components of the leadership role. It highlights the need to generate the products and services of the future. The new demands of the workforce will in turn require developing or acquiring skills, competencies, and technologies that can reposition the organization for future growth and new ways of working.

Our research has reinforced our belief that HR leaders must perform well in all four quadrants of the model if they are to add value at the executive and enterprise level. Let's take a closer look at the model and what each quadrant represents in terms opportunities and challenges.

BUSINESS PROFESSIONAL

The number one priority for HR leaders is to move from being a business partner - in a supporting role - to being a business peer. That means having acumen on three key fronts:

Business Acumen: able to talk business strategy and results with the CEO, talk numbers and financial measurements with CFO, and walk the talk expected of the entire executive team. The Human Capital Strategist must understand where and how human capital impacts the bottom line, moving from HR operational metrics to Human Capital reporting, analysis, forecasting and modeling. In addition, in the post-Sarbanes Oxley world, the Human Capital Strategist needs to create strategic alliances with other key executive team members such as the CFO, the CIO/CTO, and the Corporate Counsel.

Company Acumen: fluent in the trends and metrics of the industry, champion of the business strategy and goals, and in possession of a cross-functional IQ that provides an understanding of all elements of the organization. The Human Capital Strategist needs to know how to drive the external corporate brand down and through the entire internal organization to leverage talent attraction, engagement and retention at every level.

Human Capital Acumen: in addition to traditional HR competencies, it's critical to have the capability to drive a model of strategic management that includes strategic thinking, critical thinking, risk management fundamentals, fact based decision making, and evidence based management. This includes the skills sets of a social and

behavioral scientist, able to perform experiments that prove that your recommendations will create the desired outcomes.

Credibility in the Business Professional arena rests on a number of factors, not the least of which is metrics. Quantitative measures of impact on business strategy and competitiveness have historically been an HR soft spot. Although the profession is making strides in demonstrating credible, bottom line impact, what metrics to use remains a difficult question and one that goes beyond the scope of this White Paper. However, we would offer some observations.

First, like all members of the executive team, the HR executive must have familiarity with, and the ability to dissect, all elements of financial reporting, including the company's P & L statement, Balance Sheet, Annual Report, 10-K, 10Q, etc. The Human Capital Strategist needs to understand where Human Resources costs and benefits, as well as Human Capital measures, appear on these financial reports. The following matrix gives some examples of where these measures may be found.

Human Capital Reporting

P & L Statement	Balance Sheet	Annual Report / 10Q, etc	Market Value
Employee Compensation	Deferred Compensation	Compensation Strategy	Broad-based ownership
Pension Plan Payments	Funded Pension Plans	Plan designs and long term obligations	Unfunded Pension Plans
Outsourced Services	Lower Capital Investment	Executive Incentive Obligations	Financial Performance
Workers Comp Claims	Claims Reserves	Expansion, acquisition, divestiture trends	Risk Management
Training & Development			Reputation Capital

One of the primary difficulties with this exercise is that current accounting standards and reporting do not provide a good way to measure the impact that intangible assets have on the experienced market value of a company. New tools to measure intangibles are needed in the arena of Human Capital and talent management.

“Intangible assets - a skilled workforce, patents and know-how, software, strong customer relationships, brands, unique organizational designs and processes, and the like - generate most of corporate growth and shareholder value. They account for well over half the market capitalization of public companies. They absorb a trillion dollars of corporate investment funds every year. In fact, these ‘soft’ assets are what give today’s companies their hard competitive edge.”
Baruch Lev

Economist Richard Florida estimates that, “Creativity - ‘the ability to create meaningful new forms,’ . . . is now the *decisive* source of competitive advantage. In virtually every industry . . . the winners in the long run are those who can create and keep creating.” In addition to creativity, intangibles also include issues such as leadership capability, sustainability, transparency, ethics, and the impact of off-shoring.

How to measure intangibles and Human Capital value-add is not all that clear and is currently being addressed by numerous authors.

Jac Fitz-enz, the father of HR metrics, has recently founded the Workforce Intelligence Institute with the goal of creating predictive models. His goal is to move away from lagging indicators (reporting what has happened) to leading indicators (which can predict what will happen under a certain set of scenarios), with a focus on direct linkages to key business measures and predictors.

Whatever metrics you ultimately choose, the most important factor is to pick measures that speak directly to your stakeholders. What is of importance to each company will be slightly different, and each audience may need a slightly different view. Our research indicates that there are three audiences in need of different types of Human Capital performance data: the CEO/CFO/Board of Directors, the Executive Team, and the HR Organization.

LEADER

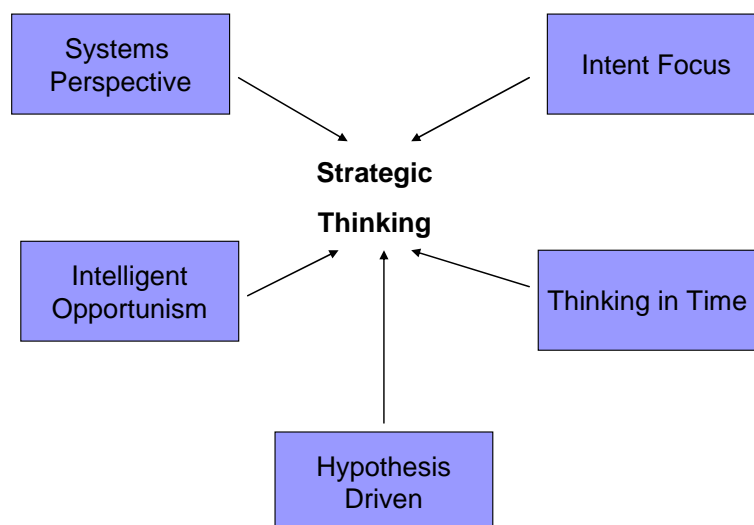
The Human Capital Strategist needs to be, before anything else, a good leader and fully functioning member of the Executive team. They need to be the human face of business strategy in a much more sophisticated way than the employee champion role of the past. Boudreau and Ramstad note, “Talent’s critical role now transcends the HR profession. Our conversations with CEO’s, CFO’s and other senior executives in leadership roles reveal this change vividly. In the past they may have tolerated discussions about HR and talent . . . but did not see talent issues as their personal responsibility. Today, these executives are quick to point out that managing talent well is not only their

personal concern, it is the most difficult issue preventing their organization's maximum success."

To take advantage of the heightened awareness of their counterparts, HR leaders need to move away from what might be their natural orientation of being the people person - enthusiastic, friendly, empathetic, and consensus building - to a leadership orientation that mirrors the rest of the executive team. Recent research by Management Research Group®, Inc. identified the most important attributes for individuals to be seen as effective in the executive suite. This study included 1,200 executives from 15 countries and 400 organizations. The most important leadership attributes for individuals in C-Suite roles, regardless of functional responsibility, are the ability to:

- Analyze the future impact of decisions and understand the impact of those decisions throughout the organization.
- Clearly express their thoughts and ideas, keeping others informed of their expectations.
- Operate with energy and keep others enthusiastic and involved.
- Use effective persuasion to build commitments to their ideas and initiative.
- Maintain in-depth knowledge and expertise in their area.

One of the best models we have found for assisting leaders in stepping up to the strategic demands of the C-Suite role was developed by Jean Leidtke at the University of Virginia Darden School of Management. Leidtke's model differentiates between the analytical aspects of strategy making (strategic planning) and the creative aspects (strategic thinking), but makes clear that both are required for true strategic management.



Liedtka's model defines strategic thinking as a particular *way* of the thinking, with very specific and clearly identifiable characteristics with practical application for line leadership.

The model can transform today's planning process in a way that incorporates, rather than undermines, true strategic management. The goal is to identify and strategically add capabilities to create superior value for customers; that is, value that is hard for competitors to imitate. This approach also has the ability to make organizations more resilient and adaptable to change because of their ability to take fresh perspectives.

"It all comes down to the ability to go up and down the ladder of abstraction, and being able to see both the big picture and the operational implications, which are signs of outstanding leaders and strategists." L. Heracleos

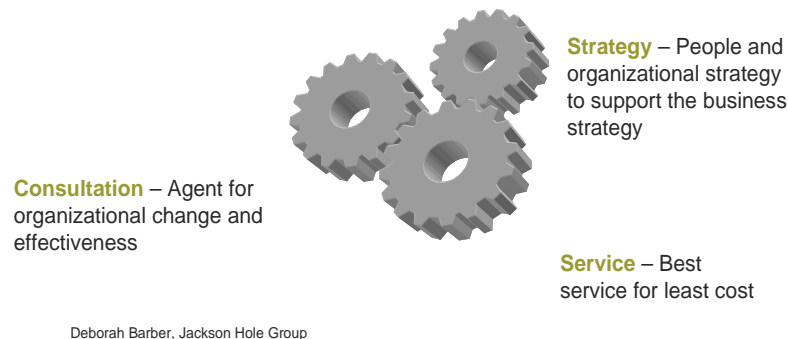
GENERAL MANAGER

HR leaders and the HR profession as a whole have lacked the same respect, credibility and impact as other areas of the organization such as finance, marketing, and operations. One way to gain credibility and stature is to ensure that the HR "business unit" is the best run and best managed in the company. This means that HR leaders must look at themselves as General Managers, leading a multi-functional organization that is effective, efficient, and is measured on how it contributes to the strategic success of the organization. "What is urgent," said one executive recruiter we spoke with, "is that businesses are losing a key success component by misdirected and, in some cases, poorly defined HR functions." The progressive HR leader must be a business manager first and foremost, looking at HR as a "business within the business" - to declare themselves the CEO of H.R., Inc. They need to be able to speak the same language and make the same case for being in business that the CEO's of HR outsourcing companies are making.

As the head of the HR organization, the leader cannot just think in terms of Staffing, Training, Compensation, Employee Relations, and other traditional HR functions. They must also think in terms of products and services linked to their marketplace and customer needs, how to market and sell their services, how to manage the financial elements of their enterprise, how to ensure operational efficiency and integrity, and how and when to fund R & D activity.

Deborah Barber of the Jackson Hole Group has defined the three HR value propositions as Service, Consultation and Strategy. Barber correctly asserts that if we don't get the first one right - best service for least cost - we will never have the opportunity to move to the higher levels of value add.

Three HR Value Propositions



Once again we need to rethink HR metrics, separating out those metrics that measure the internal HR operations from those that address the larger, enterprise wide issues of Human Capital analysis and modeling we talked about earlier. John Budreau has defined three levels of measurement that map to Barber's three value propositions.

- Efficiency (time and money, input ÷ output):
 - Benefits costs/employee
 - Cost/hire
 - Time to fill positions
 - Cost/grievance
 - HR expenses/total operating expenses
- Effectiveness (ratios and scorecards):
 - ROI
 - Balanced Score Cards
 - Human Capital Revenue = revenue per employee
- Impact (business results):
 - HR performance impact strategic success
 - Time to integration/adoption
 - Closed loop feedback

Numerous authors have struggled with these elements of the equation with varying levels of success. For example, we can relatively easily measure the cost of hiring an employee, but it is much more difficult to measure that employee's contribution to organizational performance and achievement of the business strategy.

Aligning HR operational metrics with the vocabulary and metrics already used in other functional areas of the company, such as manufacturing and marketing, is probably a good starting point. Each HR leader has to resolve this

issue in terms of their own business strategy and goals, measurement standards in their industry, and their own unique organizational expectations of the HR function.

HUMAN CAPITAL VISIONARY

With the new emphasis on talent, innovation, and a global approach to Human Capital, the HR executive is more valuable than ever. Adding value to the executive team means understanding what is important to them - reaching down at a moment's notice - to speak to the "hot topics" and the "hot buttons" of each team member at the table, and understanding exactly how the HR function is linking into their needs. John Sullivan has identified some common hot buttons in the executive suite: share price, profit, revenue growth, product margins, product brand, customer satisfaction, speed of product development, output volume, output quality, expanding capabilities, customer retention and attraction, supplier and strategic partner relationships, and anything that gives competitive advantage. Dr. Sullivan advises HR executives to think of themselves as influencers, to build a deep understanding of the individuals they are trying to influence, and to create a marketing plan for themselves, managing their "internal image" and building their "external brand."

Being the Human Capital expert and visionary means having credibility at the Board level that goes beyond the Compensation Committee. Heidrick and Struggles' Board Services Group reports that, "To date, only a handful of progressive boards have recruited HR executives into their ranks. But it is a trend that we expect to see accelerate as boards continue to evolve from bodies dominated by current and former CEOs into teams of highly skilled specialists with distinct competencies." As a challenge to the profession, they also point out that, "Our best estimate is that no more than 10 to 20 percent of the senior-level HR executive cadre in the U.S. have the skills and competencies required to be a strategic player at the board level."

Most importantly, the leading edge of this part of the Human Capital Strategist role goes beyond functional expertise in HR to future focused vision. This requires being on the forefront of trends (in all arenas and disciplines) which impact business strategy and execution. In terms of intangible assets, we have started talking about the 4 C's. Human capital, the traditional domain of Human Resources, has exploded to include Social Capital, Creative Capital, and Reputation Capital as well. Here is a brief definition of what we mean by the 4 C's:

- **Human Capital:** the knowledge, skills, and abilities that allow individuals to produce goods and services - the traditional domain for Human Resources

- **Creative Capital:** any product of the human intellect that is unique, novel, and unobvious (and has some value in the market place) - the key to innovation and competitiveness
- **Social Capital:** the institutions, relationships, and norms that shape the quality and quantity of social interactions - the core of the networked, collaboration based Enterprise 2.0, both inside and outside of the organization
- **Reputation Capital:** general estimation in which a person or thing is held by the public - your organization's internal and external brand

The true Strategist's expertise needs to expand out to cover economics, political science, and the social sciences as well as the impact that technology is having on all these areas. Challenging but exciting times are ahead for those who can stay in race and up to speed!

In Conclusion

We have a window of opportunity to make the next decade the best of times for the HR profession, to redefine the profession for a future that we can barely imagine, and to elevate the status of the top HR executive to new levels of impact and importance. That will require letting go of old paradigms and acquiring new skills sets. It will mean creating new HR career ladders that include "time on the line" and working outside our countries of origin, not to mention outside our comfort zones. Understanding all forms of technology and the Net Generation of future workers will become mandatory. Successful HR leadership will be harder than ever, but will be also more rewarding and will require broader perspective. We look forward to taking the journey into the future with you.

"Under the pressure of global competition and volatile markets, virtually all senior-level corporate roles have changed in recent years, but none more dramatically than that of the senior human resources (HR) officer . . . positioned at the intersection of strategy and execution, with a charter to recruit, assess, develop and deploy talent across the organization . . . the vehicle that converts corporate intent into action." Hal Johnson

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Helen Peters, M.A., heads the Leadership Development Practice for Torchiana, Mastrov & Sapiro, a leading San Francisco Bay Area provider of Executive Coaching and Strategic Leadership Development services. She possess over ten years of experience as an executive coach and leadership development consultant working within a large multinational company and as an independent business manager and consultant.

Ms. Peters has worked over twenty years of business management experience, with significant international experience in IT, Human Resources, and General Management, including living and working in Europe for over five years. She has conducted published research and speaks regularly on a wide range of leadership topics including keys to leadership effectiveness, cross-cultural issues in leadership, and leadership and gender.

Deborah Saks, M.A., is President of 1 Source Consulting, a human resources company that provides top management with both strategic business and human capital solutions. Ms. Saks has held senior executive roles in the technology, healthcare and retail industries for over 20 years. Her expertise is in human resources, executive coaching, leadership development, organizational development, and performance improvement.

As a Human Resources executive, Ms. Saks has built productive executive teams in complex organizational environments, designed recruitment and talent retention systems, designed one of the first web based performance management systems, improved the functioning and governance of Boards, designed leadership and management development programs, and has coached CEO's, senior executives and high potentials.