

Rebranding HR as the focus shifts from processes to people

By [Sonia Tshabalala](#)

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Over the past few years, the way people think about work and how employers think about employees has shifted dramatically. We have emerged from a public healthcare and economic crisis with a renewed appreciation for the central role of people in the business.



Image source: Getty Images

What's more, human resources (HR) departments realise top talent is more mobile than ever. In a competitive world, the organisations that are best at attracting, developing, and retaining the best people have a competitive edge. Yet despite this reality, there are widespread perceptions that HR is all about pushing paper and filing reports.

Forward-thinking HR departments understand it's vital to challenge these perceptions. Sage's new global research, *The changing face of HR in 2024*, finds that 91% of HR leaders say the profession has changed dramatically over the last five years. Only 39% of HR leaders think employees know what HR does.

For this reason, more HR professionals are questioning whether the term 'human resources' is the right description for what they do. In our research, 73% of HR leaders and 85% of the c-suite agreed that the term is outdated. The study signals that now could be a seminal moment for the HR industry, and it's time for HR's big rebrand.

What's in a name?

A cynic might ask: What's in a name? But the reality is that talking about humans as resources is the dehumanising language of the industrial age. It creates the perception that HR is all about compliance, administration of hirings and firings, and cost optimisation. Today, however, HR is a strategic business function that plays a vital role in building a more competitive business.

With automated technologies increasingly picking up compliance and admin work, HR is empowered to focus less on processes and more on people. This is why we are seeing many companies rebrand HR as the 'People' or 'Talent' function – it is all about finding the best people, ensuring they have a great workplace experience, and helping them unlock their full potential.

Getting the best from people

Progressive businesses know they will attract and keep the best people – and get the best out of them – by offering a healthy company culture and an engaging workplace experience. HR has a vital role to play in nurturing this environment by partnering with the business to engineer rewards, incentives, career paths, and training opportunities that help people be their best.

In addition, HR is the steward of a potential goldmine of business data. Insights into absenteeism, overtime, employee attrition and retention, skills available, and employee well-being, engagement, and satisfaction can help the business make smart decisions as it grows. HR deserves a seat at the table where important decisions are made.

HR leaders are often the unsung heroes of an organisation but have demonstrated their influence, visibility, agility, and impact over the last few years more than ever. Rebranding the function, in this context, is not a simple name change. It is a way to highlight why HR plays a vital role in helping people and businesses reach their growth and development targets.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Sonia Tshabalala, Regional People Director, Sage AMEA

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