

Management In Real Life

by Kevin Herring

Here's a radical thought. The next time you have an opening in human resources, information systems, finance or accounting, change your ad in the local newspaper. Instead of hiring a functional expert to administer the performance management process, run financial reports or enforce budget spending limits, hire someone who knows how to consult to those in operations and improve fundamental business results.

Your ad might change like this:

In search of the perfect candidate...

HELP WANTED (Traditional)	→	HELP WANTED (New)
Seeking functional experts in human resources, information systems, finance or accounting.		Seeking committed business people with ability to contribute positively to the bottom line who possess functional expertise in human resources, information systems, finance or accounting.
In addition to meeting technical requirements, successful candidates will have experience enforcing organization policies and adherence to applicable laws. Candidates must have a background in developing and improving policies and procedures, ensuring consistent practices across the organization, and developing reports and recommendations to senior management. Experience obtaining employee buy-in and rolling out company-wide programs such as re-engineering, six sigma, total quality and benchmarking projects a plus.		Must be able to learn all aspects of the business quickly, understand issues that affect our ability to improve quality, profitability, cycle time and unique ways to serve the customer, and be able to help our business compete in the marketplace.
Required skills include ability to maintain confidentiality with sensitive information, manage multiple priorities, develop good working relationships with senior management and compile reports.		Successful candidates will have experience effectively transferring their expertise to those in operations in ways that directly improve the bottom line. They will embrace risk as a component of the marketplace by making offers to clients who have choice about who they will use for services.
		Required skills include collaborative consulting, dealing with client resistance, leveraging expertise to solve problems directly impacting the bottom line, assessing expertise against business requirements and making compelling offers to clients.

Bittersweet change...

While this new person is out playing consultant, who's going to be doing the real work, you ask? That problem has almost taken care of itself. Several vendors now wrap their arms around entire staff functions like accounting and human resources. IBM is the latest to take the plunge by signing a \$400 million contract to perform HR functions for Proctor & Gamble in 80 countries.

"They'll give it up after a couple of years," you say. Maybe, but right now surveys show client satisfaction with outsourcing soaring over 90%.

It seems that in-house support services departments are becoming relics. But that doesn't mean HR professionals, accountants and programmers should rush to the recycling bins for cardboard to make their WILL WORK FOR FOOD signs. It just means that instead of compliance and transactional activities, they'll be able to use what they know to beef up the bottom line - something HR people have been saying they could do if executives would just give them the chance.

A glimpse of the future?

Here's how it might look. A small team of experts in HR, finance, accounting and IS report to the CEO promising results they'll achieve for the business - a true ROI conversation. This team makes offers to clients in operations to help them improve their productivity, cost and other bottom line results. These are offers clients can refuse if not compelling enough. In the meantime, a centralized administration group oversees the work of vendors managing transactions, legal reporting and other functions, and handles any administrative work not outsourced.

Sound idealistic? Unrealistic? Time will tell, but at the pace some firms are moving to outsource most of their support services, it may not take long to find

out.

Does this mean that if you're in support services you should rush to revamp your resume for the new HELP WANTED ads? Not necessarily. It depends on what you want to do for a career. If you're averse to change, the traditional resume will still land you an interview with an outsourcing firm.

Trying it on for fit: If you're in a support services function, make a list of your current activities at work. Mark with a check those that outsourcing firms would be willing to do along with non-value added activities that could be dropped altogether.

You might have to do some research to find out all the capabilities of vendors, but don't be surprised when you complete the exercise and find very few activities left without checks by them. You may be amazed at all the things that could be taken off your plate and free you up to solve those pressing business problems that have been plaguing the operations.

Find ways to unload activities that fail to directly contribute to the bottom line and use your expertise to make significant improvements to operating results. In addition to improving your image with operations, consider it a good start to building that new resume.

Send an e-mail and let me know what you learn from your experiences. I would love to hear from you!

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