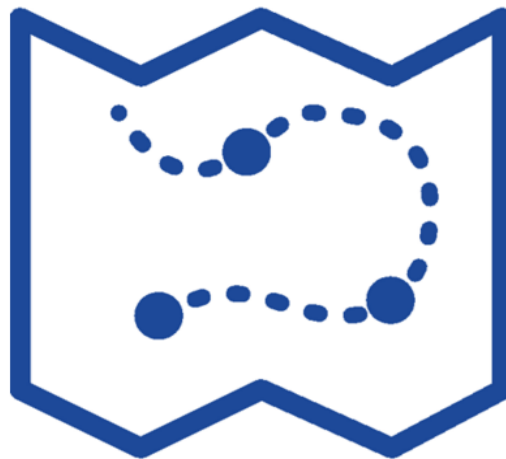


SHRM Competencies: *Leadership&Navigation*

HR: how to navigate these seas?

Leadership and Navigation in a changing world.

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Unprecedented innovations are changing the future of work creating new industries and business models. This environment is efficiently represented by the term **VUCA**, a military acronym describing a world which distinctive characteristics are *Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity e Ambiguity*.

It's **volatile** because it changes rapidly, **uncertain** because it's difficult to foresee, **complex** because it's influenced by many factors, and **ambiguous** because it's hard to interpret.

The VUCA environment is the one where technological, legal and cultural changes are an everyday occurrence and it's going to remain like this in the future. Here rules a sort of organizational Darwinism: in order to survive, organizations need to develop their ability to change, adapt and innovate.

It's not an automatic process and *Leadership* becomes an essential skill to face the disorientation caused by this unpredictable environment. **Direction** and **coherence** are required to avoid confusion and paralysis.

The HR function role has often been perceived as passive, but for today's and tomorrow's business world what it takes is **a more proactive mindset focused on strategic business objectives**.

HR *Leadership* is a relatively new idea: how can HR professionals demonstrate *Leadership*?

To answer this question we need to address two related ideas:

- **HR Leadership isn't just about developing and managing** a good HR team;
- **Leadership doesn't concern only** those who have **roles of power** in the organization.

1. HR Leadership, value and competitive advantage.

HR professionals have to develop the necessary *Leadership* to work within their team and with other internal stakeholders.

Managing an HR team is not the final goal. Instead, it aims to **create value**, helping the organization work more efficiently and obtain the skills needed to keep on doing it in the future. The HR function has the difficult task of **answering the business immediate issues** while maintaining a long-term perspective. This implies the necessity for a **vision** that considers the organization as a whole, with its strategic needs and resources.

HR professionals are required to develop a **pragmatic approach** towards **strategic goals** but they also have to **lead the change** towards a **sustainable success**. Without this, they will fail in their aspiration to make a full contribution to the business and they may become redundant.

To assure that the organization has the resources needed to efficiently operate now and in the future, HR professionals have to acquire not only **business acumen** and a **strategic perspective**, but also the **Leadership** needed to define a vision for HR initiatives.

They also play a key role as “guardians” of the organizational culture: they work to make it stronger when it’s necessary, but they are also able to identify needs for change, acting as **facilitators**.

In today’s world, business ventures need to rapidly change course. Because of this, **it’s important that everyone feels the direction is common**.

To achieve this, the leader has to be like a good captain: he sees the end of the journey and knows how to make his crew work together to take the ship to destination.

An HR leader has to have many abilities: in addition to being able to watch over the horizon for new opportunities, he also has to know how to remove the obstacles during the course. He can do this by fostering good **communication, motivation and engagement**.

In this sense, we can associate another skill to *Leadership*: **Navigation**, the ability of the HR practitioner to sustain, motivate and drive people towards their goals while having the organizational values as a point of reference.

Navigation implies the capacity to be a person of trust that, acting as a link between management and workforce, provides a **secure base** and **orientation**.

2. Leading from everywhere.

It's common to consider *Leadership* as a competency required and practiced only by those who officially lead in the organizational hierarchy, but it can also be viewed with a broader perspective. In fact, the idea that the leader is the "boss", while common, it's outdated and not functional to organizations working in dynamic environments. *Leadership* isn't necessarily linked to a person's position inside the organizational chart, being the "boss" isn't a requirement for guiding others and being influential.

Of course *Leadership* is a skill which importance **grows as responsibility does**. However, HR professionals at all levels are in a key position to build effective relationships. For them *Leadership* doesn't need to be a top-down process.

From this point of view, the organization can be divided into **4 levels**: top management, middle management, HR team and employees.

The role of HR therefore is to provide support to the top management in the development of business strategies that take into account the people who form the organization; to help middle managers be good leaders for their staff; to efficiently contribute to the HR team and to give the employees the tools to achieve their objectives.

The most difficult challenge for an HR leader is to create a **sinergy** but the command-and-control approach and micromanaging are not the most effective strategies to draw from people's skills and talents.

Leadership can mean different things depending on the context and the people you're interacting with: there isn't one effective kind of it for every situation.

HR leaders need to use many strategies and behaviors to build trust and collaboration among stakeholders and team members, to promote and support initiatives, to act as role models, mentors or consultants, to inspire and empower, to develop commitment and to guide towards common objectives.

In this sense, *Leadership* is the ability to create the conditions in which everyone can **put their talents to use** and **work together**. It's a key competency which builds morale, motivation and engagement of every organizational actor and makes it possible to achieve outstanding results.

"SHRM Competencies" is a series of articles **written by the students of the 34th edition of GEMA Master's Degree in Human Resources Management.**