CAREER OPPORTUNITIES IN HUMAN RESOURCES:
GENERAL AND TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT

Description of the Field
Every organization wants to attract, motivate, and retain the most qualified employees and match them to jobs for which they are best suited. Human resources, training, and labor relations managers and specialists provide this connection. In the past, human resources professionals performed the administrative function of an organization, such as handling employee benefits questions or recruiting, interviewing, and hiring new staff in accordance with policies established by top management. Today's human resources professionals manage these tasks, but, increasingly, they consult with top executives regarding strategic planning. They have moved from behind-the-scenes staff work to leading the organization in suggesting and changing policies.

In an effort to enhance morale and productivity, limit job turnover, and help organizations increase performance and improve results, human resources professionals also help organizations effectively use employee skills, provide training and development opportunities to improve those skills, and increase employees' satisfaction with their jobs and working conditions. Although some jobs in the human resources field require only limited contact with people outside the human resources office, dealing with people is an important part of the job (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2012). Areas of specialty within the human resources function include: organizational and employee development (training), employee relations, compensation, diversity management, benefits, talent management, and talent acquisition (recruiting).

Human Resources Generalist
The responsibilities of human resources generalists can vary widely, depending on organizational needs. However, in general, a human resources generalist administers various human resources plans and procedures for all personnel; assists in the development and implementation of personnel policies and procedures; prepares and maintains employee handbook and policies and procedures manual; investigates employee relations issues; participates in the development of department goals, objectives, and systems; administers compensation program; and monitors performance evaluation programs. The structure of the human resources department will determine the direct reporting structure, however, most often a human resources generalist reports to the Director of Human Resources.

Director of Human Resources
The Director of Human Resources may oversee several departments, each headed by an experienced manager who most likely specializes in one personnel activity such as recruitment, compensation, benefits, training and development, or employee relations.

Training Managers
Training managers specialize in developing and conducting training, education, and employee development programs. Increasingly, management recognizes that training offers a way of developing skills, enhancing productivity and quality of work, and building loyalty to the firm. Training is widely accepted as a method of improving employee morale, but this is only one of the reasons for its growing importance. Other factors include the complexity of the work environment, the rapid pace of organizational and technological change, and the growing number of jobs in fields that constantly generate new knowledge. In addition, advances in learning theory have provided insights into how adults learn and how training can use such insights more effectively.
Training Specialists
Training specialists plan, organize, and direct a wide range of training activities. Trainers conduct orientation sessions and arrange on-the-job training for new employees. They help rank-and-file workers maintain and improve their job skills, and may prepare development programs for employees in lower level positions. These programs are designed to develop both current and potential executives to replace those retiring. Trainers also lead programs to assist employees with transitions due to mergers and acquisitions, as well as technological changes. In government-supported training programs, training specialists function as case managers. They first assess the training needs of clients and then guide them through the most appropriate training method. After training, clients may either be referred to employer relations representatives or receive job placement assistance.

Planning and program development is an important part of the training specialist's job. In order to identify and assess training needs within the organization, trainers may confer with managers and supervisors or conduct surveys. They also periodically evaluate training effectiveness.

Depending on the size, goals, and nature of the organization, trainers may differ considerably in their responsibilities and in the methods they use. Training methods include on-the-job training; schools in which shop conditions are duplicated for trainees prior to putting them on the shop floor; apprenticeship training; classroom training; and electronic learning, which may involve interactive internet-based training, multimedia programs, distance learning, satellite training, videos, and other computer-aided instructional technologies, simulators; and conferences and workshops for jobs requiring greater skill.

Career Paths
The duties given to entry-level workers will vary depending on whether they have a degree in human resource management, have completed an internship, or have some other type of human resources-related experience. Entry-level workers often enter formal or on-the-job training programs in which they learn how to classify jobs, interview applicants, or administer employee benefits. They then are assigned to specific areas in the personnel department to gain experience. A possible career path may involve advancing to a managerial position that oversees a major element of the personnel program (e.g. compensation or training).

Demand
Human resources, training, and labor relations managers and specialists held about 904,900 jobs in 2008. The following table shows the distribution of jobs by occupational specialty:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupational Specialty</th>
<th>Number of Jobs</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Training and development specialists</td>
<td>216,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment, recruitment, and placement specialists</td>
<td>207,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human resources, training, and labor relations specialists, all others</td>
<td>224,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human resources managers</td>
<td>63,100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compensation, benefits, and job analysis specialists</td>
<td>121,900</td>
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</tbody>
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Human resources, training, and labor relations managers and specialists were employed in virtually every industry. About 12,900 specialists were self-employed, working as consultants to public and private employers. The private sector accounted for more than 8 out of 10 salaried jobs, including 11% in administrative and support services; 9% in professional, scientific, and technical services; 9% in manufacturing; 9% in health care and social assistance; and 9% in finance and insurance firms.
Qualifications Necessary to Enter the Field
The human resources field demands a wide range of personal qualities and skills. The diversity of the workforce requires that human resources professionals work with or supervise people with various cultural backgrounds, levels of education, and experience. Human resources professionals must be able to cope with conflicting points of view, function under pressure, and demonstrate discretion, integrity, fair-mindedness, and a persuasive, congenial personality. In addition, human resources and training managers and specialists must speak and write effectively.

The educational backgrounds of human resources professionals vary considerably. For entry-level jobs, employers usually seek college graduates. A master's degree in human resources, labor relations, or in business administration with a concentration in human resources management is highly recommended for those seeking general and top management positions. In addition, some human resources professionals will become certified as a Professional in Human Resources (PHR) or Senior Professional in Human Resources (SPHR). Certification eligibility is based on a person’s years of human resources experiences, level of education and successfully passing a certification exam.

Sample Group of Employers

Private Sector
- IBM – www.ibm.com
- BP – www.bp.com
- Mercer - www.mercer.com
- Microsoft - www.microsoft.com
- Oracle - www.oracle.com
- Pricewaterhouse Coopers - www.pwc.com

Nonprofit Organizations
- Spring Institute - www.spring-institute.org
- Institute for International Education - www.iie.org
- World Health Organization - www.who.int

Resources for Additional Information

Associations
- American Management Association - www.amanet.org
- American Society for Training and Development - www.astd.org
- American Staffing Association - www.americanstaffing.net
- International Association for Human Resources Information Management - www.ihrim.org
- Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) - www.shrm.org

Internet Resources
- DiversityInc - www.diversityinc.com
- Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM)- http://jobs.shrm.org/
- – look for Human Resource careers opportunities
- Jobs4HR.com - www.jobs4hr.com
- Workforce Management - www.workforce.com
LinkedIn Groups
- Human Resources Group - [www.linkedin.com/groups/Linked-HR-1-Human-Resources-3761](http://www.linkedin.com/groups/Linked-HR-1-Human-Resources-3761)
- Human Resources Professionals - [www.linkedin.com/groups/Human-Resources-Professionals-Unofficial-forum-120142](http://www.linkedin.com/groups/Human-Resources-Professionals-Unofficial-forum-120142)

Publications


The HR Answer Book: An Indispensable Guide for Managers and Human Resources Professionals, American Management Association, 2004