What's Hindering HR Success in 2019?

Uncover roadblocks, maximize efficiencies and attain HR strategic goals

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JUNE 2019

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Executive Summary

Like other corporate functions, Human Resources (HR) is increasingly asked to deliver greater value than it has in the past. To accomplish this, many HR departments are striving to take on more strategic roles while carrying out their traditional administrative roles more efficiently and effectively.

So, how is HR faring in these endeavors? To find out, HR.com fielded the *What's Hindering HR's Success in 2019* survey in partnership with Access, the largest privately-held information management provider in the world.

In essence, we discovered that most HR professionals feel their departments are well aligned with the goals of their larger organizations, but they continue to struggle with a number of key challenges, including administrative inefficiencies and onerous back-office burdens.

As a result, many are striving to become more efficient at their traditional roles, hoping this will free up enough time and resources needed to engage in other roles such as strategist and business partner. These key points are further discussed below.

About this Survey

HR.com fielded the *What's Hindering HR's Success in 2019* survey in March and April of 2019. There were 338 usable responses. The research was conducted in partnership with Access, the largest privately-held records and information management (RIM) services provider in the world. Responses were gathered from HR professionals in virtually every industry vertical. The majority of responses came from mid-sized to large organizations with most headquartered in North America, particularly in the United States.

The Good News on HR's Alignment

- Most HR professionals believe that they and their organizations are relatively well aligned around the issues of efficiency, skills and engagement in 2019. The most widely cited organizational goal for 2019 is improving productivity/efficiency, followed by the desire for higher levels of employee engagement. Holistically, talent is a major theme for the organization at large and, as you would expect, for HR as well.

- A majority (63%) of HR professionals believe there is a high or very high level of alignment between HR goals and organizational goals. Indeed, HR is highly focused on improving efficiency, notably through more automation of manual processes. HR is also focused on employee engagement and on the acquisition and development of skilled workers.

The Bad News on HR's Efficiency and Primary Roles

- If the good news is that HR professionals and their organizations tend to be aligned around the issue of efficiency, then the bad news is that, generally speaking, HR isn't there yet.

- In fact, a little over half of HR professionals rate the efficiency of their HR departments as average or below, and most (59%) say that having "too many inefficient manual processes" is the single biggest barrier to key HR initiatives.

- It is little wonder, then, that HR is still viewed as filling roles that are more administrative than strategic. When asked about which roles they play in their organizations, the most widely given answers are administrator (76%) and compliance expert (75%). In contrast, just 34% say they're seen as strategists to a high or very high extent.

HR's Achilles' Heel: Back-office Burdens

- HR professionals recognize they must do better in order to gain more efficiencies and take on a more strategic role. So, what's stopping them? Back-office burdens.

- Most HR professionals (71%) say that two-fifths or more of their HR department's time is spent on administrative duties. What's more, 34% say HR is spending three-fifths or more of its time on these duties. When asked how much time they as *individuals* spend on administrative work, half of participants devote at least 41% of their time to administrative back-office duties.

The Secrets to Meeting Alignment Goals

- In short, HR's goals are aligned with organizational goals, but they're hindered from meeting those goals by administrative burdens. We asked participants about what they need—and yet are lacking—in order to achieve greater administrative efficiencies. It turns out that nearly two-thirds (63%) say a lack of automation hinders them, and 45% cite a lack of technological integration across HR silos.

- To enable HR to address efficiency barriers and achieve higher performance, HR professionals may well benefit through investments in greater automation, better technology integrations and support, and more process improvements.

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The Payoff

- Some HR departments have already reached higher levels of efficiency and have seen the benefits. For example, compared with less efficient HR departments, they report even higher levels of alignment with their organizations. They are also more likely to be viewed as business partners, culture keepers and strategists.

- Taking advantage of the time saved by greater efficiencies, these HR departments are placing greater emphasis on strategic HR issues, such as finding, developing and engaging top talent.

- In short, by gaining greater efficiencies through process improvements and automation, HR has a better chance of becoming the high-value strategic function that top leadership, as well as HR itself, increasingly requires.

How Well Aligned with Organizational Goals Is Today's HR Function?

Finding: Improving organizational productivity and efficiency is the top organizational goal for 2019

Participants were asked to choose up to four items that represent their organization's most critical business goals. The most commonly selected response was "improve our productivity/efficiency," cited by 63%.

We find it interesting that this was chosen ahead of other historically popular business goals, including boosting employee engagement (58%), hitting sales goals and growth targets (52%), increasing customer satisfaction (43%) and winning the "war for talent" (40%). This may be related to the frustratingly low labor productivity rates of recent years in various nations. In the U.S., annual growth in labor productivity—as measured by output per hour— has not exceeded 2% since 2010.

At a time when the labor market is tight and skilled employees are hard to come by, employers may be increasingly intent on trying to get more production and performance out of each employee as a means to faster business growth. Taken in aggregate, people/talent remain a top priority as an enabler of most other goals.

Survey Question: Please choose four items that represent your organization's most critical business goals for 2019. (select up to four)

Business Goal	Percentage
Improve our productivity/efficiency	63%
Boost employee engagement	58%
Hit our sales and growth targets	52%
Increase customer satisfaction	43%
Win the "war for talent"	40%
Improve services/products	33%
Become more innovative	28%
Transform the organization	27%
Reduce and manage risk better	24%

A majority also cite employee engagement and hitting growth goals as critical business goals

Finding: Most HR professionals say their departmental goals are well aligned with their corporate goals

Getting organizational goals aligned throughout the organization can be a powerful step to achieving strategic success. A majority (63%) of HR professionals believe there is a high or very high level of alignment between HR goals and organizational goals.

Survey question: To what degree do you believe the HR goals for 2019 are aligned with your corporate goals for 2019?

Alignment	Percentage
Very high	21%
High	42%
Moderate	29%
Low	5%
Very low	2%
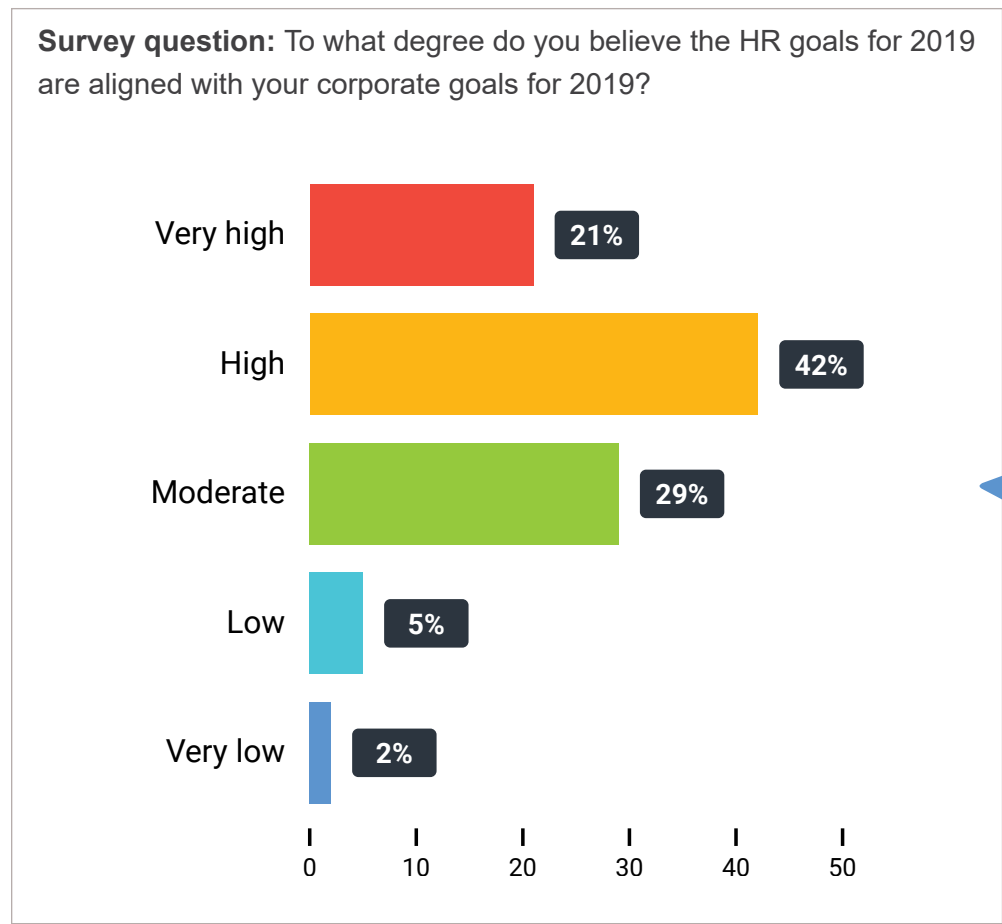
Over 90% say their HR goals are at least moderately aligned with organizational goals for 2019

Finding: Most HR professionals are focused on talent acquisition, retention, engagement and leadership, which tends to be consistent with broader organizational goals

Most HR professionals say their goals are well aligned with those of the larger organization, but does this prove out in terms of their stated goals? To a large degree, it does.
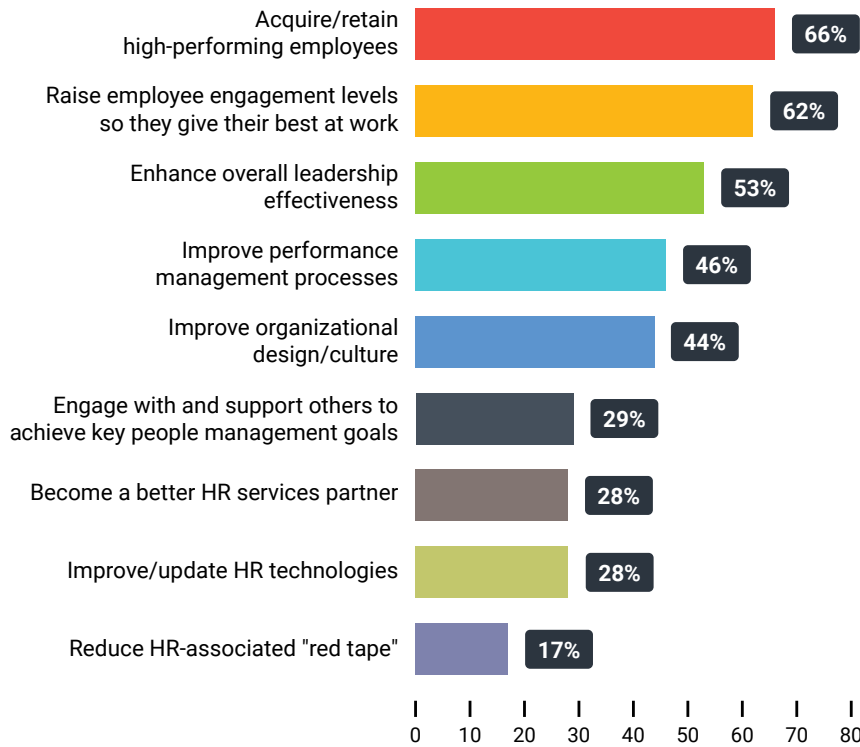
The top priority of HR is acquiring and retaining high-performing employees. This can, even if indirectly, be connected to the most commonly cited organizational goal of improving productivity and efficiency. To hit such goals, organizations need high-performing employees. The top HR goal can, of course, be more directly linked to the fifth most popular organizational goal of winning the war for talent.

For HR professionals, the second most commonly cited goal relates to raising employee engagement, an answer that directly corresponds to the second most common organizational goal.

The next two most popular HR goals—leadership effectiveness and performance management—relate to corporate objectives such as hitting growth targets and enhancing productivity. In short, the responses to this question seem to support the contention that HR is often well aligned with overall corporate goals.

Survey question: Please choose the four HR goals most important to the entire organization in 2019. (select up to four)

HR Goal	Percentage
Acquire/retain high-performing employees	66%
Raise employee engagement levels so they give their best at work	62%
Enhance overall leadership effectiveness	53%
Improve performance management processes	46%
Improve organizational design/culture	44%
Engage with and support others to achieve key people management goals	29%
Become a better HR services partner	28%
Improve/update HR technologies	28%
Reduce HR-associated "red tape"	17%

Scale: 0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80

Employee engagement is viewed as a major goal both at the HR and organizational levels

Finding: Two overarching internal HR goals stand out: boosting skills and gaining efficiencies

We also asked participants to select up to four options that describe steps or actions designed to improve the *internal* HR function. Half or more selected six different options, but each of them can be boiled down to one of two goals, both of which are described in greater detail below:
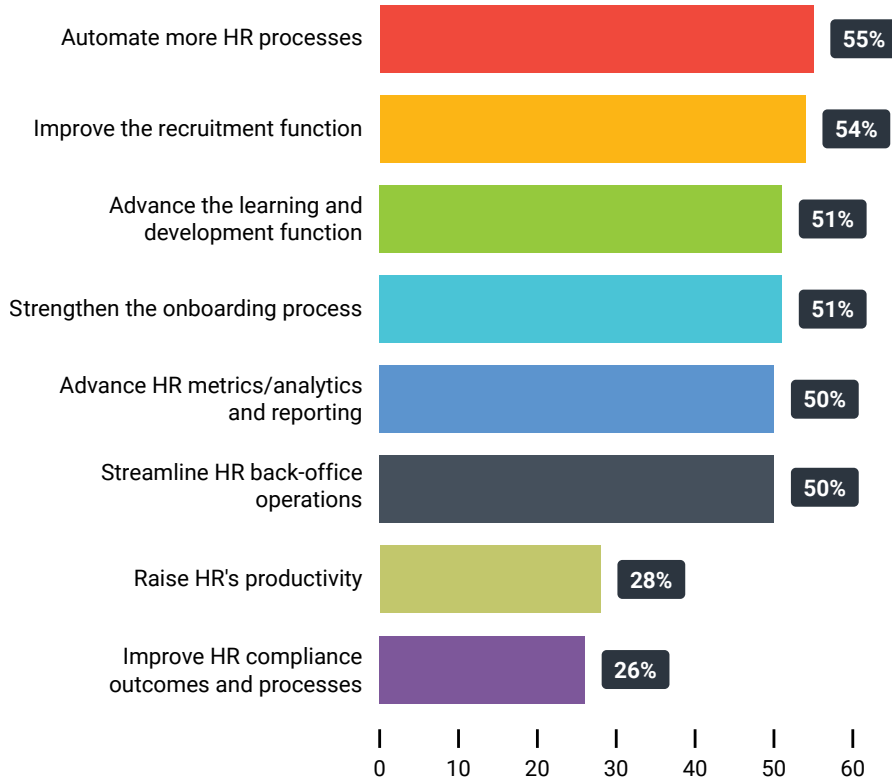
Goals for boosting efficiency:

- Automate more HR processes, cited by 55%. Automation holds the promise of efficiency and productivity gains. —As long as automated processes are well-integrated, they reduce the IT burden on HR and are user friendly. It is critical that when automating, HR teams take the time to examine and improve their processes versus simply automating a process that was designed for a different time and world.

- Streamline HR back-office operations, cited by 50%. Nothing screams "improve efficiency" louder than "streamline your processes!"

- Advance HR metrics/analytics and reporting, cited by 50%. In this era of "big data," HR teams can be overwhelmed by the sheer volume of data they can access. So, advancing the efficient use and application of data to improve decision-making and processes looms as an important HR goal for 2019 and beyond.

Goals for increasing talent levels:

- Improve the recruitment function, cited by 54%. Although there is an efficiency element here as well (firms increasingly want to raise quality while hiring faster as lower costs), the HR goal is primarily to increase the skilled talent pool of the organization.

- Advance the learning and development function (L&D), cited by 51%. Again, although there are efficiency aspects to L&D, the primary goal is to boost the skill levels and productivity of the workforce.

- Strengthen the onboarding process, cited by 51%. Employers seeking to hire skilled people, raise their levels of skills via L&D, and get them up-to-speed as quickly as possible. Onboarding plays a major role. Moreover, there are emerging tools and technology solutions that reduce both the time and tedium usually associated with onboarding.

Survey question: Please choose the four goals most important to improving the internal workings of the HR department in 2019. (select up to four)

Goal	Percentage
Automate more HR processes	55%
Improve the recruitment function	54%
Advance the learning and development function	51%
Strengthen the onboarding process	51%
Advance HR metrics/analytics and reporting	50%
Streamline HR back-office operations	50%
Raise HR's productivity	28%
Improve HR compliance outcomes and processes	26%

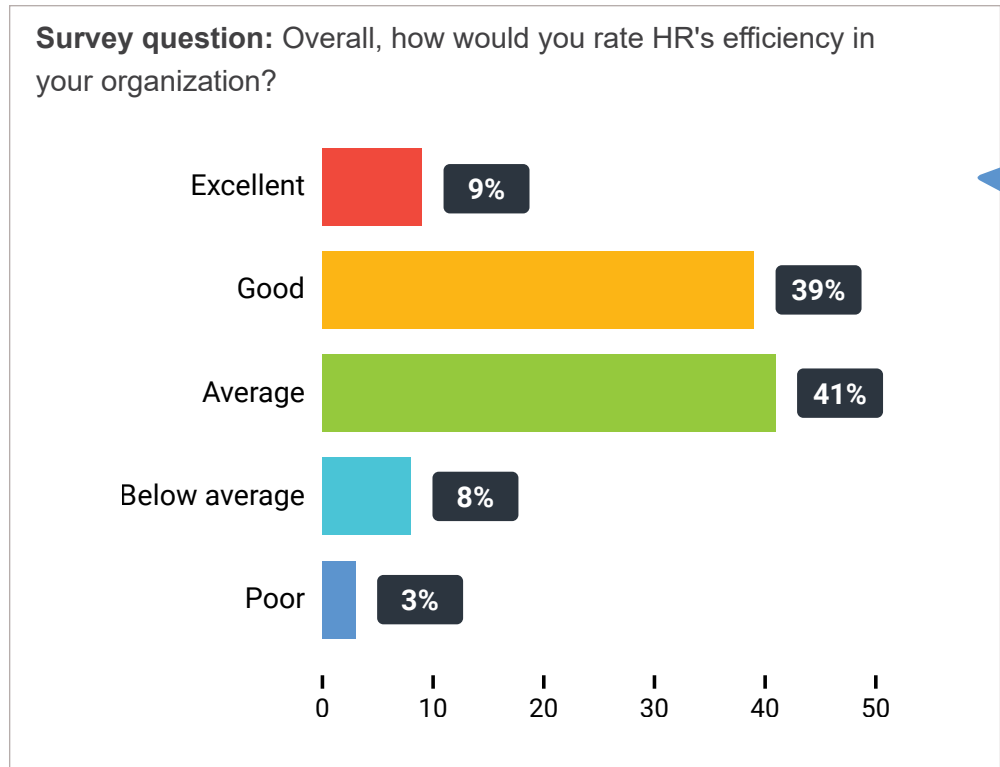Becoming more efficient dominates internal HR goals for 2019

How Efficient Are HR Departments?

Because internal HR often has stress factors such as automation and streamlining, we can guess that there are problems with HR efficiency in many of today's organizations. This turns out to be true for many employers.

Finding: Fewer than half of HR professionals describe the efficiency of their departments as good or excellent

A little less than half of participants (48%) rated the efficiency of their HR department as good or excellent.[1] The rest deem their functions as average or below. It's clear that many believe HR could be more efficient.

Survey question: Overall, how would you rate HR's efficiency in your organization?

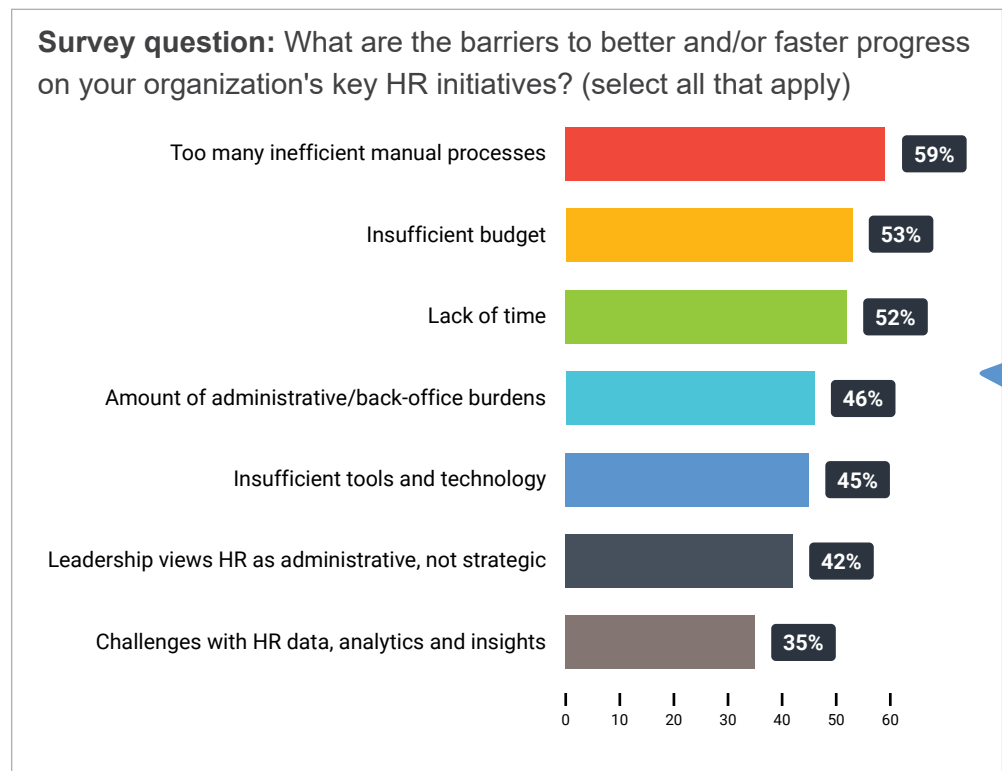| Rating	Percentage
Excellent	9%
Good	39%
Average	41%
Below average	8%
Poor	3%

Less than 10% rates HR's efficiency as excellent

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1   Later in the report, based on this data, we break respondents into two groups for the purpose of analysis: HR efficiency leaders and HR efficiency laggards. The leaders are those who responded "good" or "excellent" to this question, whereas the laggards are the rest of the participants.

Finding: Inefficient manual processes stand in the way of HR initiatives and success

In another strong indicator that inefficiencies are a serious concern for HR, a majority of HR professionals (59%) say having "too many inefficient manual processes" is the single biggest barrier to key HR initiatives. Participants selected two other responses more than half of the time: insufficient budget (53%) and lack of time (52%). While we offered the options as separate and distinct choices, participants could choose all that applied to their organization, and the top three choices are likely closely related.

Inefficient processes can be improved with effective use of technology and automation, which requires an allocation of budget dollars to acquire and implement new solutions. A general lack of time can turn all of these barriers into a terrible Catch-22. HR practitioners don't have the time they need to function strategically or to search for solutions to improve efficiency, which in turn keeps them stretched for time and operating inefficiently. And, the cycle likely repeats until and unless leadership sees a compelling business case (and allocates more funds) to change something. The entire cycle revolves around a fundamental lack of efficient HR operations.

Survey question: What are the barriers to better and/or faster progress on your organization's key HR initiatives? (select all that apply)

Barrier	%
Too many inefficient manual processes	59%
Insufficient budget	53%
Lack of time	52%
Amount of administrative/back-office burdens	46%
Insufficient tools and technology	45%
Leadership views HR as administrative, not strategic	42%
Challenges with HR data, analytics and insights	35%

HR departments struggle to overcome multiple deficiencies

What Roles Are HR Departments Playing Today?

Earlier in this report, we revealed that HR professionals view their department as fairly well aligned to their organizations, but there's also evidence that some respondents are overstating or misjudging strategic alignment. Why? Because HR professionals are much more likely to identify themselves as playing administrative rather than strategic roles in their organizations.

Finding: Barely one-third of respondents view HR as playing a strong strategic role
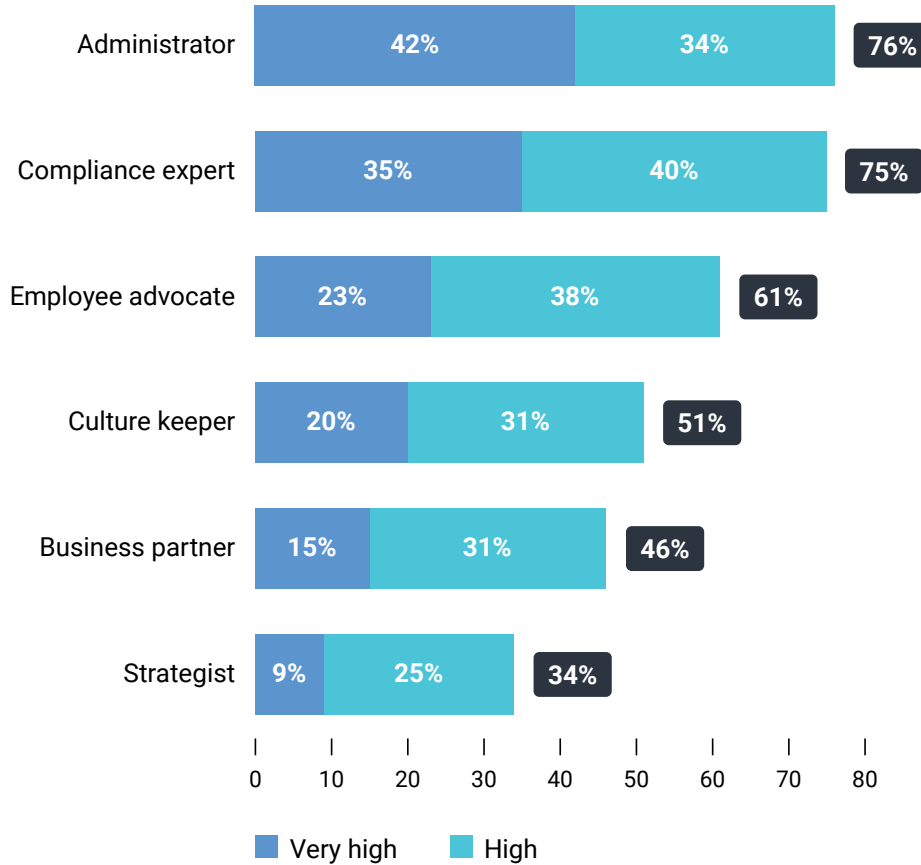
When asked about which roles they play in their organizations, the answers that responding HR practitioners are most likely to give (to a high or very high degree) are the roles of administrator (76%) and compliance expert (75%).

Although such roles can be important in organizations, they do not seem very well aligned with organizational strategic goals related to productivity, engagement, sales growth and customer satisfaction. Such goals are more strongly related to roles such as culture keeper, business partner and strategist.

Therefore, we'd argue that even if many HR professionals feel that their departments are well aligned with the larger organization, there is much room for improvement. In fact, this may be why only 21% of respondents say HR is well aligned; they're aware that alignment could and should be even higher.

Survey question: Generally speaking, to what degree is HR viewed as filling the following roles in your organization?

Role	Very high	High	Total
Administrator	42%	34%	76%
Compliance expert	35%	40%	75%
Employee advocate	23%	38%	61%
Culture keeper	20%	31%	51%
Business partner	15%	31%	46%
Strategist	9%	25%	34%

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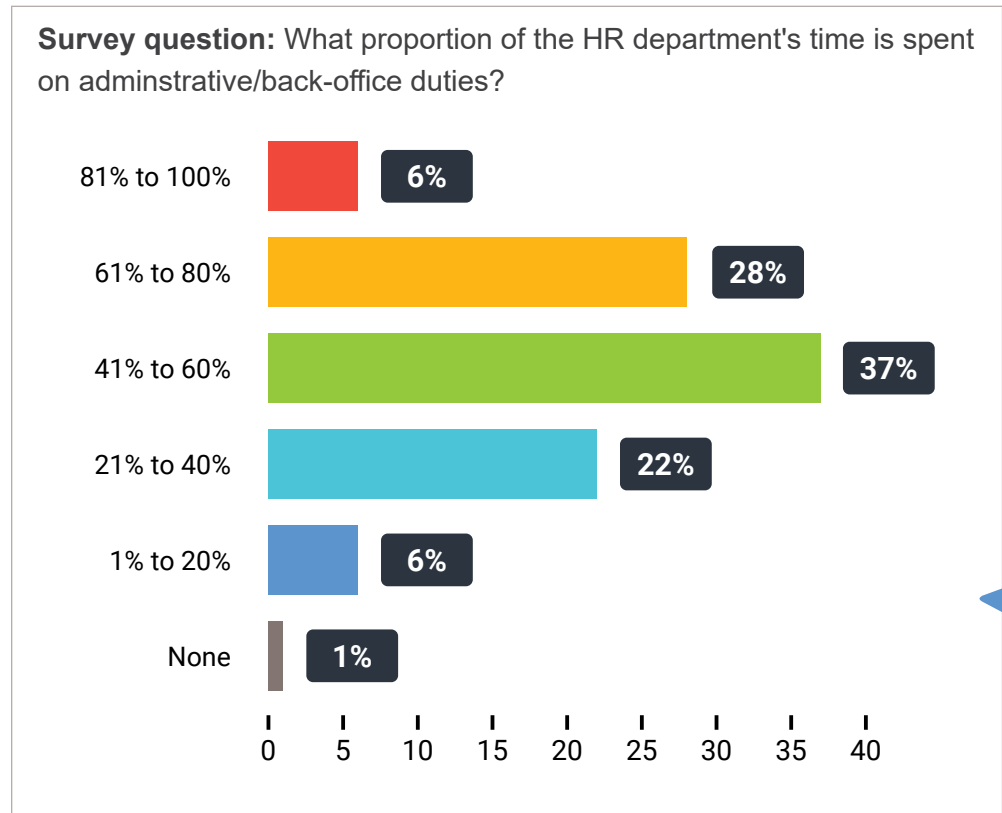
■ Very high   ■ High

HR professionals are most likely to see their function as playing a highly administrative role

Finding: The vast majority of HR departments spend over 40% of their time on administrative functions

To get a clearer idea of the scope of administrative duties, we asked about the proportion of time that HR departments spend on administrative/back-office duties. This data supports the idea that HR's administrative burden is considerable and supports the perception that HR tends to function administratively as opposed to strategically.

A large majority of HR professionals (71%) say more than two-fifths of HR's time is spent on administrative duties. What's more, 34% say HR is spending more than three-fifths of their time on these duties. In other words, about a third of them spend the majority of their workday on administrative duties.

Survey question: What proportion of the HR department's time is spent on administrative/back-office duties?

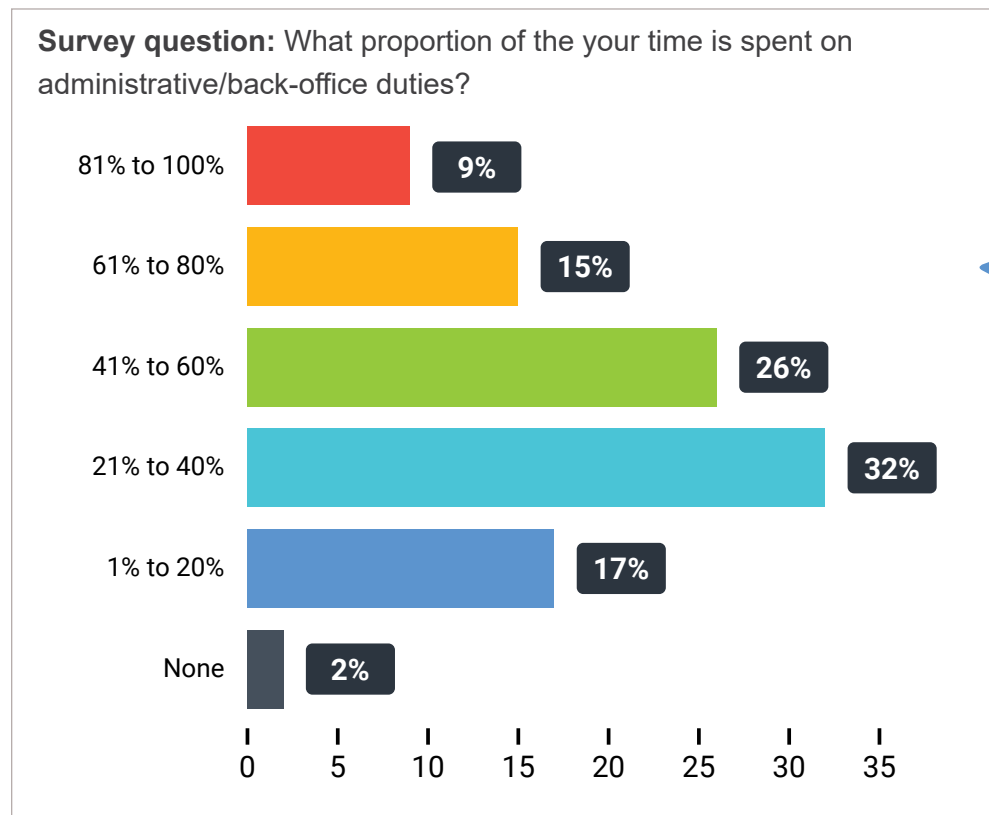| Category	Percentage
81% to 100%	6%
61% to 80%	28%
41% to 60%	37%
21% to 40%	22%
1% to 20%	6%
None	1%

Only 7% of HR departments devote 20% or less of their time on administrative back-office duties

Finding: Nearly one-in-four HR professionals spend over 60% of their time on administrative duties

We also asked participants about how much time they personally spend on administrative work. After all, HR managers and executives may spend less time on administrative duties than others.

Respondents report they spend a bit less time on administrative duties than they reported for their departments overall. In fact, 19% spend a fifth or less of their time on back-office duties, compared with 7% of departments as a whole. Even so, the administrative burdens on most HR professionals is substantial.

Survey question: What proportion of the your time is spent on administrative/back-office duties?

| Category	Percentage
81% to 100%	9%
61% to 80%	15%
41% to 60%	26%
21% to 40%	32%
1% to 20%	17%
None	2%

Half of HR employees devote at least 41% of their time to administrative back-office duties

Finding: More than half of HR practitioners say back-office administrative burdens hinder their efforts to add value to their organizations

Back-office administrative duties represent major burdens on today's HR departments, with a majority (56%) rating the burden as high or very high. Conversely, only 6% rate the level of burden as low or very low. From these responses, we can surmise that the breadth and depth of inefficient manual HR processes creates a staggering problem for many HR departments.

Survey question: In your organization, to what extent are back office/administrative work burdens hindering HR in its desire to add greater value?

Category	%
Very high	18%
High	38%
Moderate	38%
Low	5%
Very low	1%

(x-axis: 0 5 10 15 20 25 30 35 40)
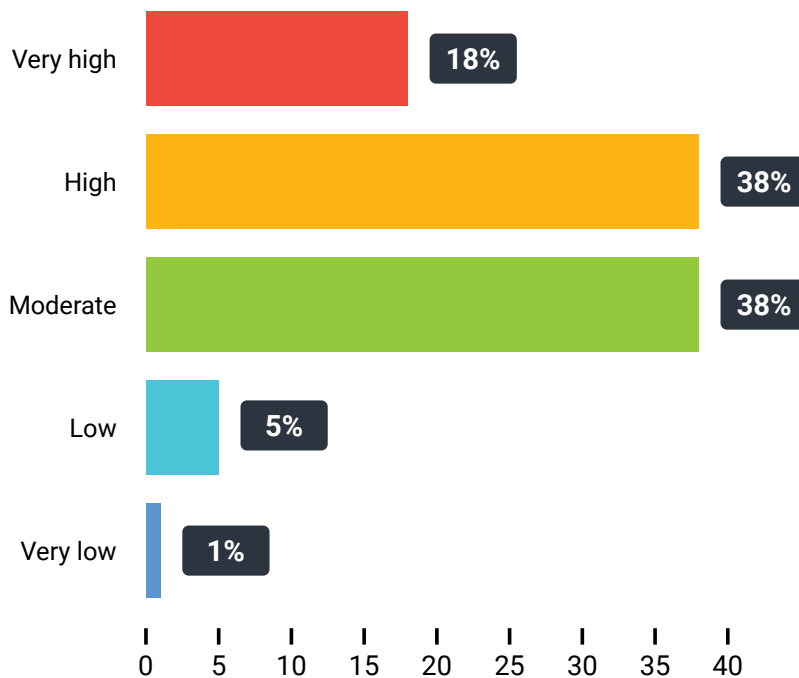
Just about all (94%) HR departments find back-office work burdensome at a moderate or above level

What Factors Are Driving Back-Office Burdens?

Finding: Back-office burdens are multifaceted

When we asked survey participants to identify the specific sources of back-office burdens, we found that over half view five different factors as major or moderate burdens:

- HR technology support
- Employee support obligations
- Compliance issues
- Tracking and reporting key performance indicators (KPIs)
- Paper work and claims issues

Therefore, what many HR professionals seem to want are technologies that require less support, more efficient ways of responding to employee needs and compliance issues, easier ways of tracking KPIs, and more efficient and productive solutions to handling "paper work."

Survey question: In your organization, to what degree are these back-office burdens?

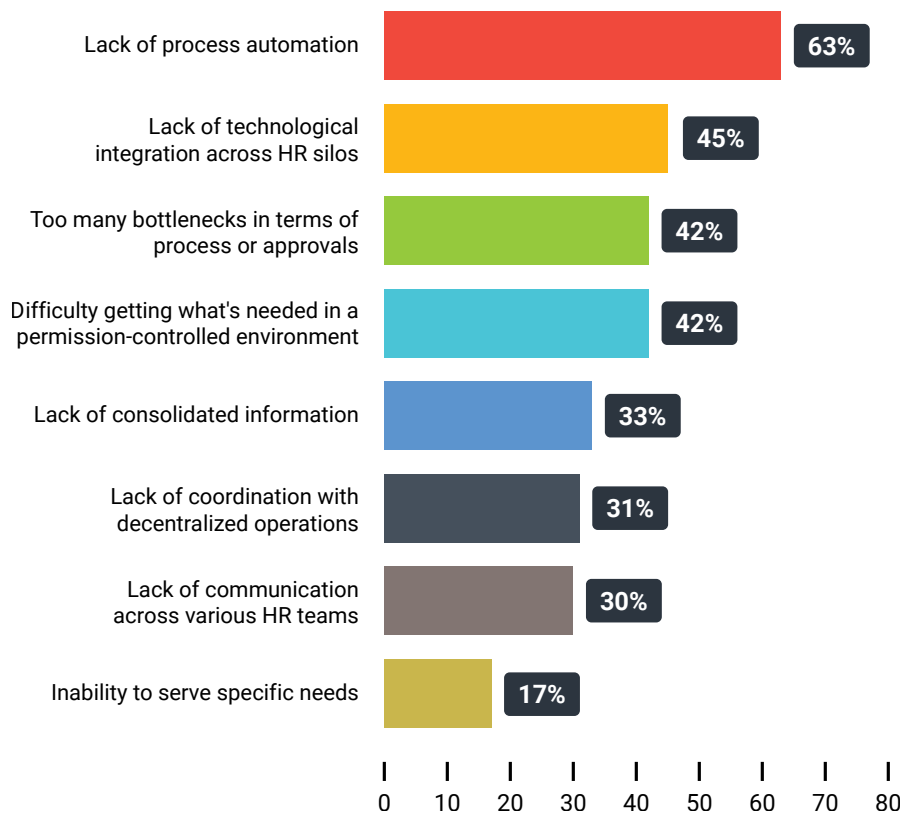| Factor	Very high	High	Total
Audits	14%	31%	45%
Paper work and claims issues (e.g., unemployment claims)	17%	34%	51%
Tracking and reporting key performance indicators (KPIs)	21%	33%	54%
Compliance issues	15%	41%	56%
Employee support obligations	19%	39%	58%
HR technology support	26%	36%	62%
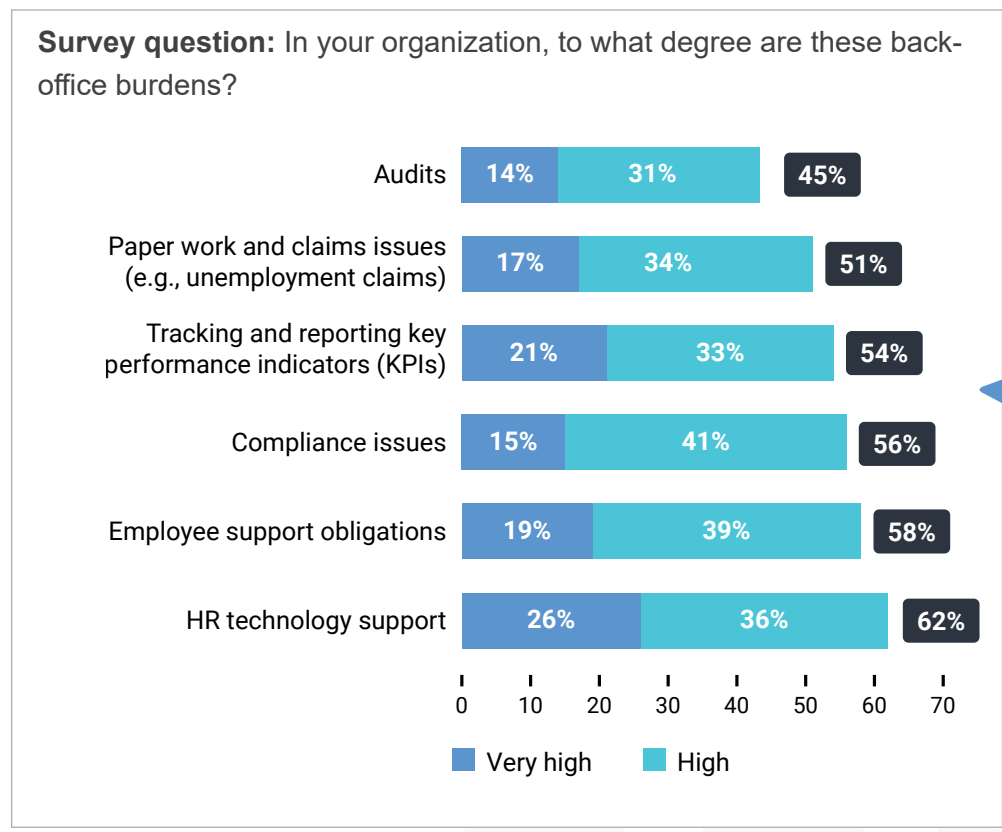
HR professionals need better productivity solutions for a wide ranges of issues

Finding: A lack of automation is standing in the way

One major issue standing in the way of achieving greater administrative or back-office efficiencies is a lack of process automation, selected by 63% of the survey responses. No other issue was selected even half of the time.

The second most frequently selected option—a lack of technological integration across HR silos—suggests HR departments are struggling to make effective use of the number of technologies currently in use.

Survey question: Which of the following issues represent challenges to achieving greater administrative/back-office efficiencies and effectiveness? (select all that apply)

Lack of process automation — 63%
Lack of technological integration across HR silos — 45%
Too many bottlenecks in terms of process or approvals — 42%
Difficulty getting what's needed in a permission-controlled environment — 42%
Lack of consolidated information — 33%
Lack of coordination with decentralized operations — 31%
Lack of communication across various HR teams — 30%
Inability to serve specific needs — 17%

More automation and integration may help address today's back-office inefficiencies

What Are the Implications of Back-Office Burdens?

Finding: Most HR professionals believe administrative duties take time away from more valuable work

Many HR departments are caught in a conundrum. Back-office duties are not optional, but when manual and inefficient back-office work pulls HR teams away from more strategic work, the perception that HR is not a strategic part of the organization is reinforced.

HR professionals are painfully aware of this. Most (82%) respondents say that the lost time spent on these issues could be spent better elsewhere. Compounding the problem is that administrative tasks can be demotivating, an outcome cited by 64%. This turns into a no-win set of circumstances for some HR teams.

Survey question: For those working within HR, what are the largest negative outcomes associated with back-office burdens? (select all that apply)

Category	Percentage
Lost time that could be better spent elsewhere	82%
Administrative HR tasks can be demotivating	64%
Human error	46%
Difficulty staying abreast of regulatory/compliance issues	36%
Budget that could be better spent elsewhere	28%
Cost of hiring experts	15%
Cost of hiring and managing temp labor	13%

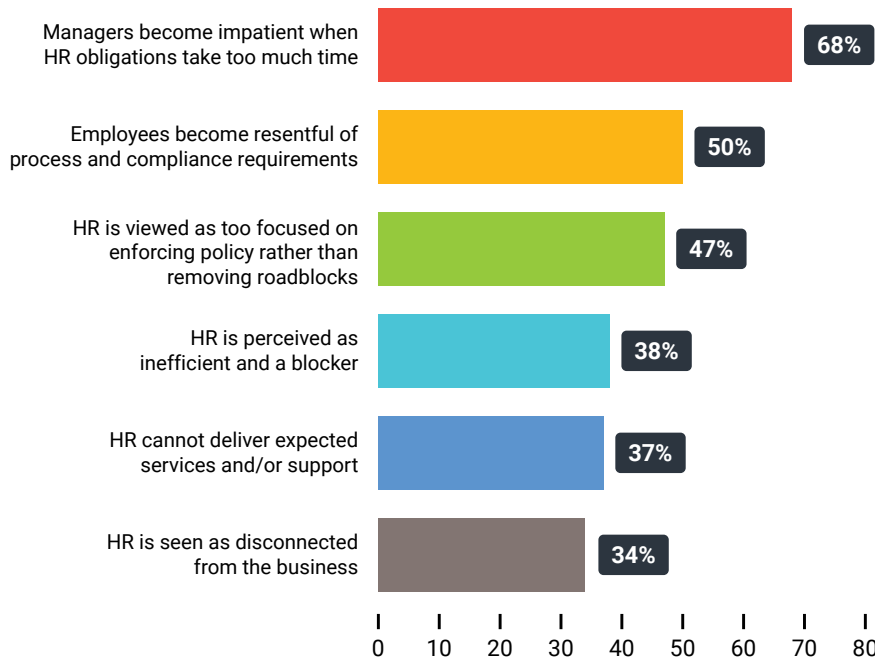Administrative back-office burdens serve to demotivate many HR practitioners

Finding: Back-office burdens frequently frustrate managers and employees

Back-office HR burdens not only frustrate HR professionals but other employees as well. Over two-thirds (68%) say managers get impatient when their HR obligations take too much time. And half report that employees become resentful of HR process and compliance requirements.

HR may not be able to do much about some compliance requirements, but process automation could contribute to better relations between HR and employees. In a related outcome, 47% of HR professionals say their department is perceived as enforcing policy rather than working to remove roadblocks.

All of these answers paint a picture of HR struggling to break free of back-office burdens and to offer more efficient and valuable service to leaders, managers and employees.
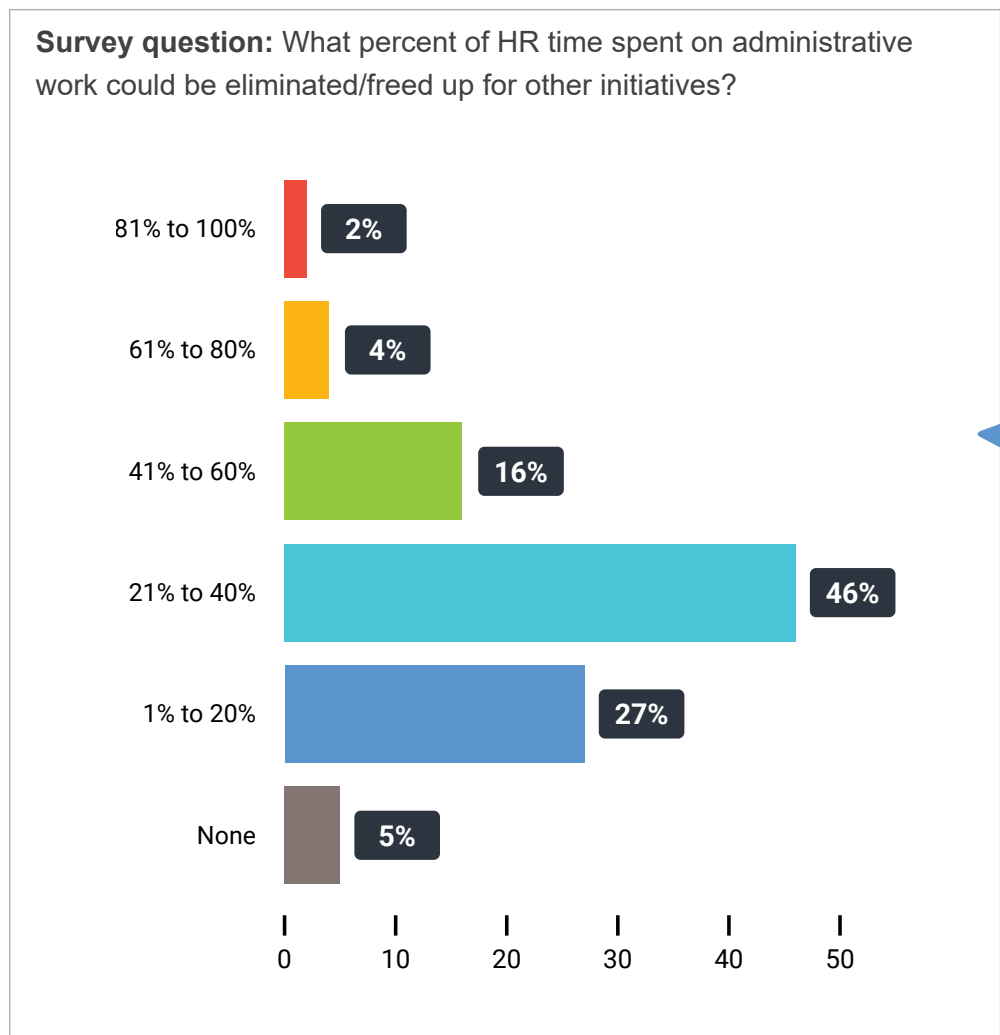
Survey question: For those working outside HR, what are the largest negative outcomes associated with back-office burdens? (select all that apply)

Category	%
Managers become impatient when HR obligations take too much time	68%
Employees become resentful of process and compliance requirements	50%
HR is viewed as too focused on enforcing policy rather than removing roadblocks	47%
HR is perceived as inefficient and a blocker	38%
HR cannot deliver expected services and/or support	37%
HR is seen as disconnected from the business	34%

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80

Administrative back-office burdens can foster negative perceptions of HR

Finding: Most organizations could see significant gains in productive time by eliminating some HR administrative work

A sizeable majority of survey participants (62%) say their HR departments could gain between one and three full work days a week by eliminating some back-office duties. Nearly half of the participants (46%) indicate they could save 21-40% of their time. Given the data we've seen above, this information – if pinned down and quantified by HR departments – could serve as a building block of a powerful business case for increasing HR process automation.
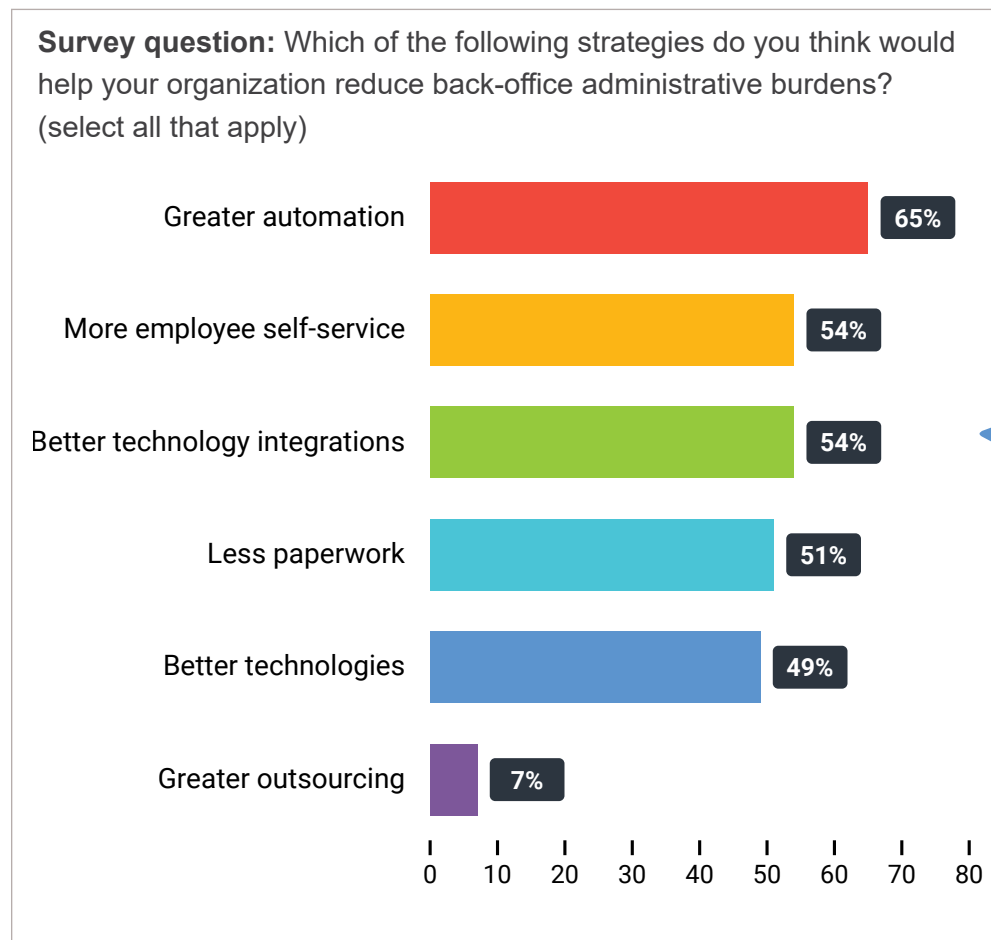
Survey question: What percent of HR time spent on administrative work could be eliminated/freed up for other initiatives?

Category	Percent
81% to 100%	2%
61% to 80%	4%
41% to 60%	16%
21% to 40%	46%
1% to 20%	27%
None	5%

> HR departments could gain significant productive time by eliminating back-office administrative functions

Finding: About two-thirds say more automation of processes is the strategy of choice for reducing back-office administrative burdens

A substantial majority of survey participants (65%) suggests that more automation is a means to reduce back-office administrative burdens. Since 55% tell us that more automation is an HR strategic goal for 2019, we can safely infer many of these organizations are already engaged in automating more HR processes.

Participants reveal two other strategies are applied 54% of the time – better technology integrations and more employee self-service. Both of these options are linked to developing a more effective and efficient suite of HR technology services. Of course, employee self-service only works well if employees can easily access and understand such HR systems. User interfaces are key.

Survey question: Which of the following strategies do you think would help your organization reduce back-office administrative burdens? (select all that apply)

Strategy	Percentage
Greater automation	65%
More employee self-service	54%
Better technology integrations	54%
Less paperwork	51%
Better technologies	49%
Greater outsourcing	7%

Better technology integrations and more self-service are also seen as key

# What Do HR Efficiency Leaders Do Differently?

In this section, we compare the practices of two groups we deem HR efficiency leaders and HR efficiency laggards, as determined by responses to the question, "Overall, how would you rate HR's efficiency in your organization?"

HR efficiency leaders align organizational goals more closely to HR goals

HR efficiency leaders are more likely than efficiency laggards to view their goals as aligned with overall organizational goals. This suggests that HR alignment and efficiency could be related.

Survey question: To what degree do you believe the HR goals for 2019 are aligned with your corporate goals for 2019? [Efficiency leaders and laggards]

70%

28%	15%
42%	43%

70	
60	
50	
40	
30	
20	
10	
0	

58%

Efficiency leaders   Efficiency laggards

■ Very high   ■ High
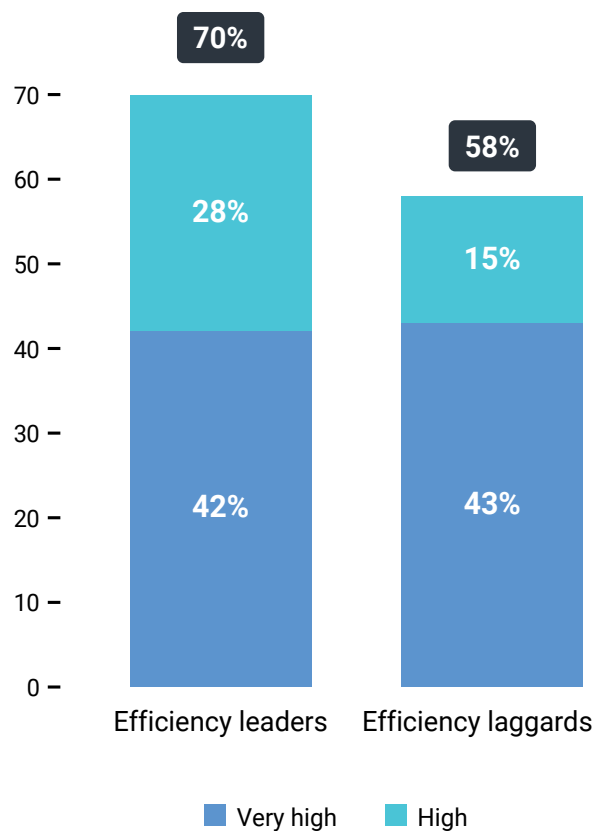
Fully 70% of HR leaders say their HR goals are aligned with organizational goals

Finding: HR efficiency leaders are more focused on upskilling the workforce

Most HR professionals readily acknowledge the importance of employee training and development. However, 62% of HR efficiency leaders make employee development an HR departmental goal, compared to only 41% of the efficiency laggards. Additionally, 59% of HR efficiency leaders make improving recruitment a strategic goal, compared to 49% of the laggards. So, most HR efficiency leaders treat talent management for current employees and prospective employees as strategic imperatives. Less than half of the laggards do.

Survey question: Please choose the four goals most important to improving the internal workings of the HR department in 2019. (select up to four) [Efficiency leaders and laggards]
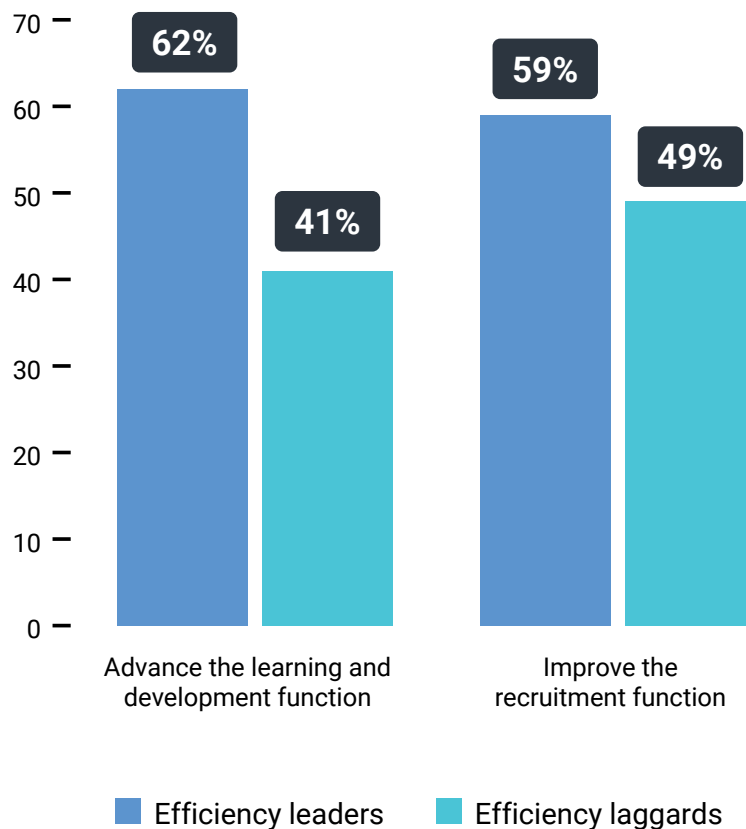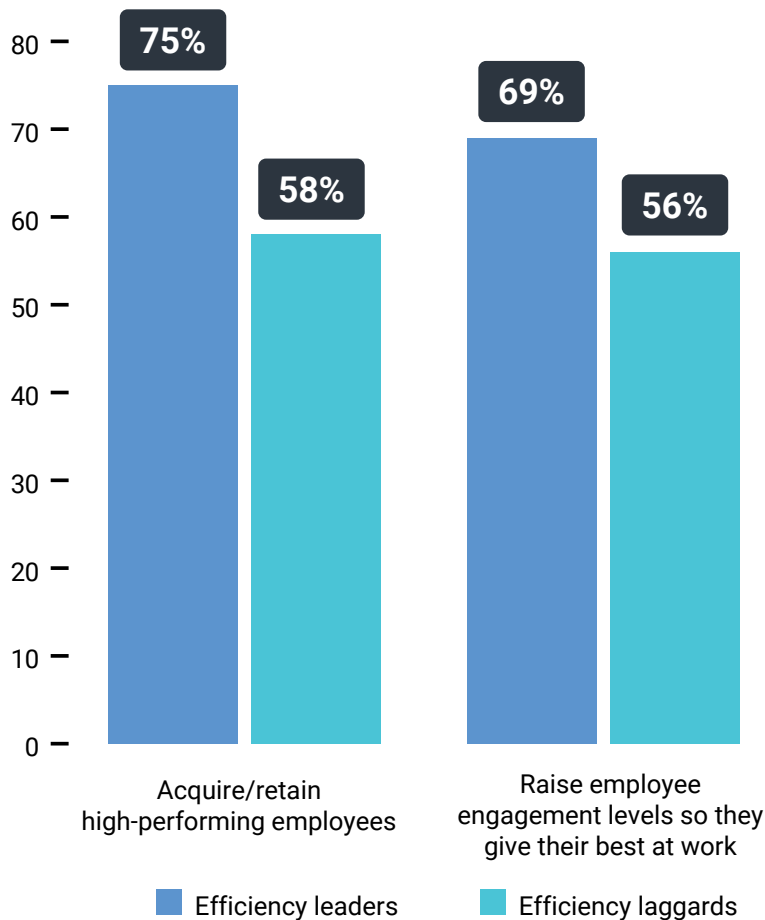

Compared to efficiency leaders, laggards are less attentive to the learning and development of employees

Finding: HR efficiency leaders more frequently identify employee-oriented HR goals as important to the organization

HR efficiency leaders appear to align HR goals more tightly with specific organizational goals. Compared to laggards, they focus more on the strategic talent management goals of recruiting top talent and boosting engagement. What emerges from these comparisons is that HR efficiency leaders take a broader and more expansive view of their strategic roles than the efficiency laggards. Leaders put employee success at the forefront of their strategic efforts, and in so doing, help drive greater levels of departmental and organizational success.
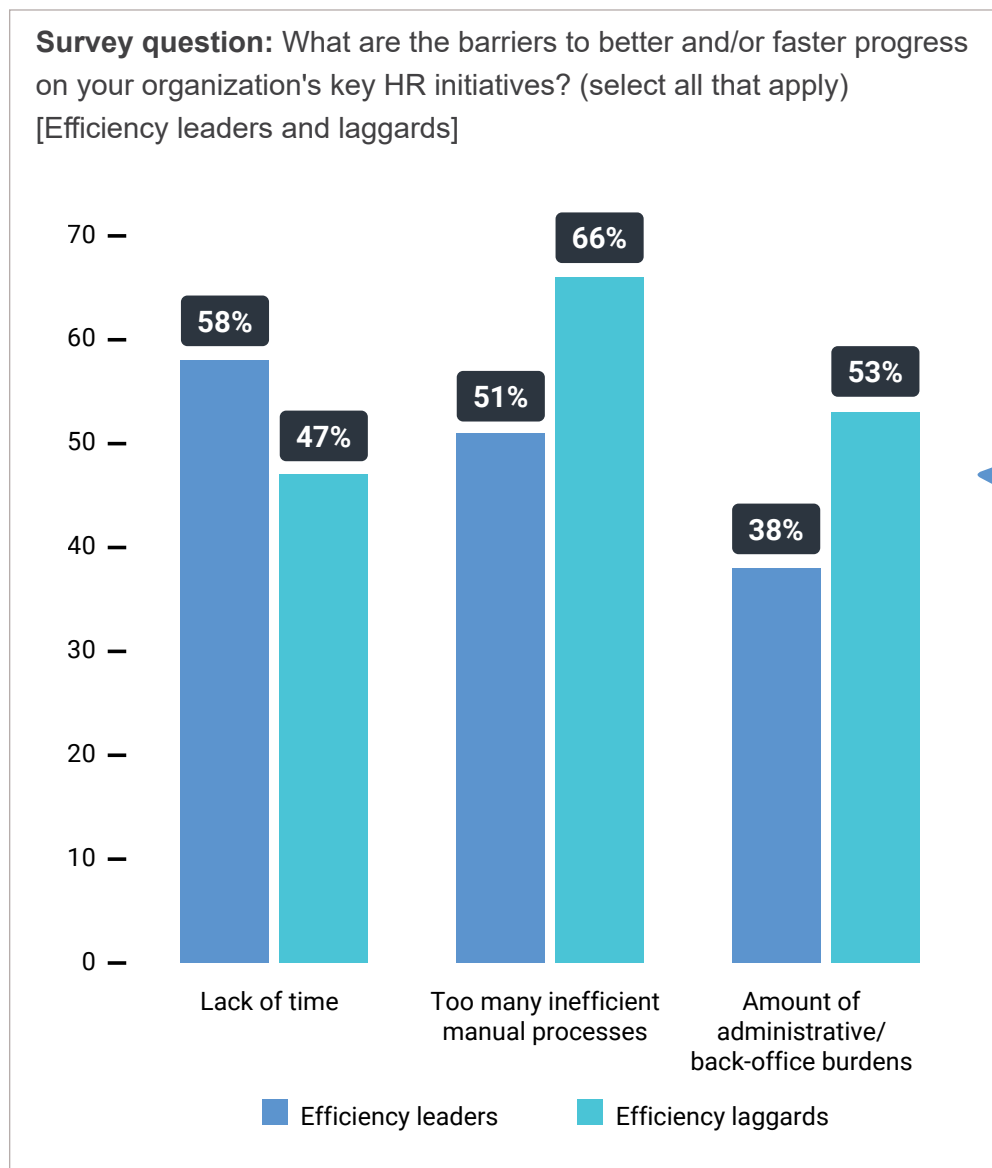
Survey question: Please choose the four HR goals most important to the entire organization in 2019. (select up to four) [Efficiency leaders and laggards]

75% **58%** **69%** **56%**

Acquire/retain
high-performing employees

Raise employee
engagement levels so they
give their best at work

■ Efficiency leaders   ■ Efficiency laggards

> **Three out of every four HR efficiency leaders said employee retention is an HR goal that is important to the organization**

Finding: HR efficiency leaders struggle with a lack of time while laggards struggle with much higher levels of inefficiency

If you want something done, give it to a busy person. That old adage seems to hold up when we look at the different major barriers that efficiency leaders and laggards face. Many efficiency leaders just don't have enough time. Laggards, as might be expected, are more likely to contend with inefficiencies in manual processes and with the volume of back-office burdens.

Survey question: What are the barriers to better and/or faster progress on your organization's key HR initiatives? (select all that apply) [Efficiency leaders and laggards]

HR efficiency leaders are less likely to face burdens from back-office administrative duties

Efficiency leaders 58% / Efficiency laggards 47% — Lack of time
Efficiency leaders 51% / Efficiency laggards 66% — Too many inefficient manual processes
Efficiency leaders 38% / Efficiency laggards 53% — Amount of administrative/back-office burdens

Finding: Efficiency leaders tend to believe they are viewed in various roles other than administrator
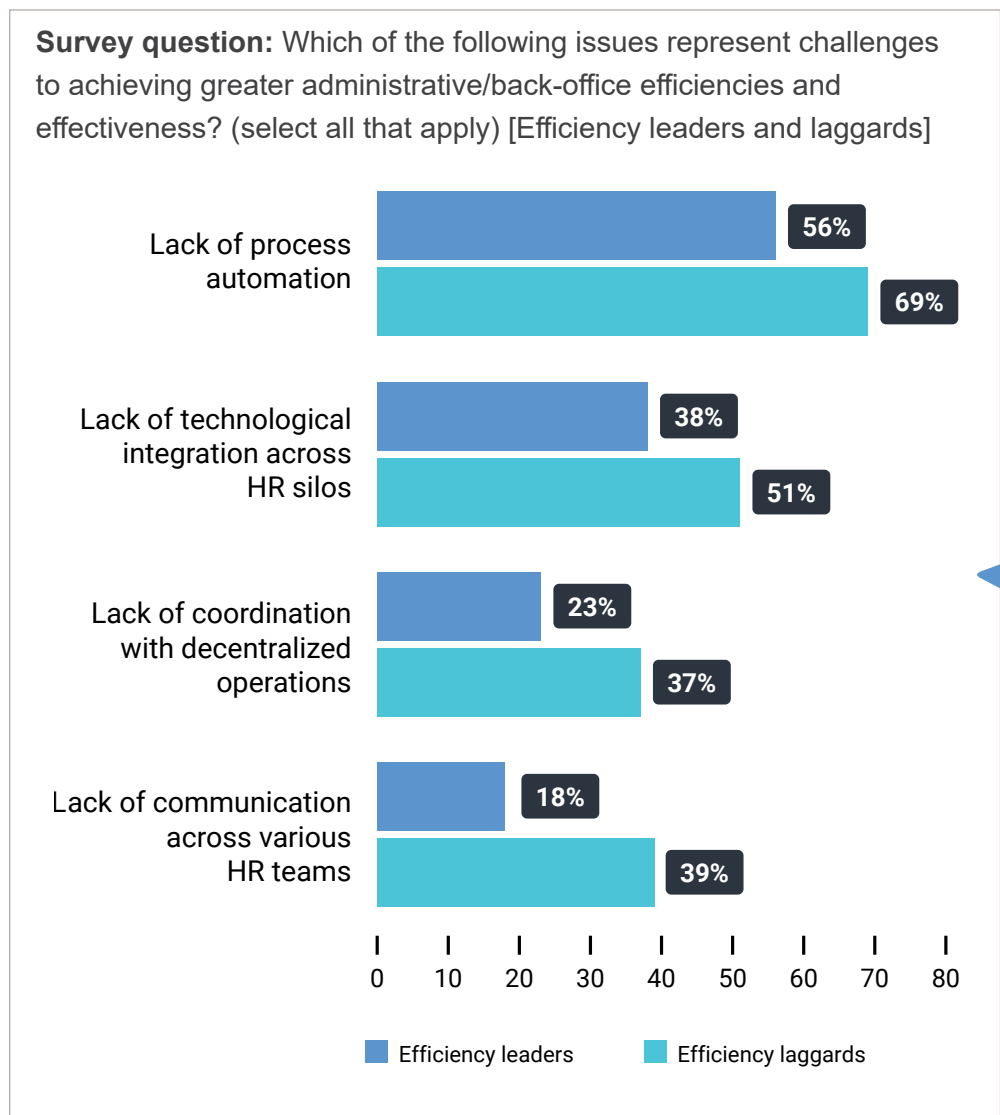
HR efficiency leaders are much more likely than others to believe they are viewed as strategists. Whereas 58% believe that HR in their organizations is viewed as a strategist, the same is true for only 24% of efficiency laggards. Efficiency leaders are also more likely to say they're viewed as culture keepers, business partners, and employee advocates.

Survey question: Generally speaking, to what degree is HR viewed as filling the following roles in your organization? [% high/very high]

Employee advocate
- 48%
- 76%

Culture keeper
- 35%
- 67%

Business partner
- 35%
- 58%

Strategist
- 24%
- 45%

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80

■ Efficiency leaders   ■ Efficiency laggards

> HR efficiency leaders are nearly twice as likely to be viewed as strategists and culture keepers

Finding: HR efficiency laggards are far more likely to face challenges to achieving greater administrative successes

HR efficiency leaders and laggards alike report that they face certain challenges to achieving greater administrative efficiencies and effectiveness. The laggards, however, are more likely to report challenges related to a lack of automation, technological integration, coordination and communication. It appears that HR efficiency leaders may already have better access to automation, integration and more.

Survey question: Which of the following issues represent challenges to achieving greater administrative/back-office efficiencies and effectiveness? (select all that apply) [Efficiency leaders and laggards]

HR efficiency laggards are faced with greater challenges stemming from inefficiencies than leaders

Key Takeaways and Recommendations

1

Consider an audit of your current HR processes. Evaluate processes, documenting why and how they are performed. Is it a necessary process? If so, how is it completed? For example, is there paperwork involved? Is it completed via e-mail? Is it all manual? Is it automated in part or in total? For each manual process or part of a process, discern if you currently have the means to improve and streamline it.

2

Look for processes and systems HR can automate. As part of the audit, look for processes and systems that can be automated. Consider eliminating extraneous steps and re-engineering the processes to better suit today's operating environment. As you seek support for automation, make sure you focus on the bottom-line improvements you expect in efficiencies and productivity. Be able to build the business case.

3

Determine if applications or online tools integrate with your current HR technology solutions. Ask your potential vendors about their capabilities to integrate with your current solutions. Do they have an API? Will you need help from your internal IT team? What level of integration support will you get as you implement the solution? Don't let cost be the only deciding factor. Strive to improve efficiencies and outcomes, and ask hard questions of providers to properly understand the support load that the technology will put on the HR team.

4

Encourage employees to use self-service HR services. The key to success in helping employees help themselves is the ease of use of the tools you provide to employees. If employees cannot do things like confirm vacation days, withholding, etc. easily with mobile devices (as well as PCs and laptops), employees are not as likely to become more self-sufficient. Focus on the end user interface. Ask vendors to demonstrate the employee facing interface, and look for solutions that are mobile ready, intuitive and easy to access.

5

Improve technology in general. Update or move on from outdated systems and apps. HR technology solutions are abundant and keep improving. Make it a point to review your agreements with current technology providers. Identify the dates by which you must renew, or when an auto-renew takes effect. Talk to the stakeholders using these tools and make a serious effort to look at competitor and alternative solutions. Every HCM or HRIS system has gaps and weaknesses. Examine the work that has remained manual or is still done via paper. Are these areas related to the gaps? If so, look for best of breed solutions that can integrate easily with your HCM software. The pace at which solutions are evolving and improving is rapid, and it makes sense to test the market to determine if your technology stack can be improved.

6

Learn how to make a business case for further investments in HR technology and HR infrastructure. It's crucial to explain to senior leadership what business benefits (more revenue, higher profits, reduced costs, etc.) the organization can expect if they make requested investments. Find relevant metrics your organization already uses to measure performance. Identify the specific metrics you anticipate influencing with your investment, and then build an understanding of what each incremental improvement along those metrics contributes to the organization's bottom line.

7

Maximize the value of employee learning and development for your organization. Talk to managers and employees to understand the difference between the current level of performance and the desired level of performance. You want training and development designed to help employees, managers, teams and departments achieve their performance goals. So, design and deliver learning content aimed at closing the performance gaps you find.

8

Consider making employee engagement an HR strategic initiative. Organizations with engaged employees sometimes see superior financial results and better rates of employee retention. Find pockets of employees or teams where employees are highly engaged. Figure out why their levels of engagement are high. Likewise, talk to teams and pockets of employees with low engagement. What differentiates the engaged from the disengaged teams? Initiate programs as needed to deliver the work environment elements that make your engaged employees more successful.

9

Where it makes sense, rebrand your HR function as a strategic player and business partner. Perceptions are hard things to change. But perceptions frequently dominate reality. So, as you shed the administrative work and see gains or measurable successes in key strategic areas such as engagement and learning, build success stories to share and publish. Success breeds success. As employees derive more benefit from HR initiatives, sharing stories will be a way to raise HR's visibility as a strategic function in the eyes of leadership. This will also help future investments and business cases since you will have proven ROI and the ability to elevate HR.

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