

# Hey, Workplace Learning Pro! You're Next!



PITY THE POOR HR PROFESSIONAL. He is mocked for his irrelevance. Or worse, she is portrayed as a torturer of small animals (as on a recent business magazine cover). Why, oh why, should these hard-working professionals be treated so badly?

Frankly, most of them haven't done enough to prove their own worth. And in this profit-driven, results-required, budget-justifying era, nothing could be more deadly to a career—or a profession. In a number of larger organizations, many of the more transactional HR functions have been outsourced, leaving the department to concentrate on staffing and personnel development. That's great, but increasingly these areas are being viewed in a critical new light, with new yardsticks being applied to the HR efforts. This often includes, at a minimum, a serious focus on return-on-investment.

But what is the HR department doing to make itself more relevant? Setting up even more lunches between line workers and executives? No, some HR pros are shoving their way into the executive ranks by proving, systematically, some sort of financial return (or business strategy relevance) to their function. But for every star HR performer, there are dozens who have done nothing to make themselves more relevant by improving their own business acumen.

The real red flag here should be noticed by workplace learning and performance—WLP—professionals. I urge you to read the cover story in the August issue of *Fast Company*. It is a brutal assault on the HR folks. Then, take any paragraph in the article and replace "HR" with "WLP." If you don't feel the hair on the back of your neck stand straight up, then you don't get it. When top management gets finished making HR "more relevant and responsive," they will be looking for you.

Are you ready?

Rex Davenport  
Editor  
rdavenport@astd.org



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