



## INTEGRATED HEALTHCARE STRATEGIES™

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# Elevating the Role of the Healthcare Human Resource Leader - Part 4

Presented by Integrated Healthcare Strategies  
as Authored by Kevin Haeberle and Martina Young

This is the final article in a four-part series examining the elevation of the role of the human resources leader in healthcare organizations. In the past several issues of the Integrated Healthcare Strategies' newsletters we have explored the following four key factors which were identified as necessary to elevate the role of the Human Resources Executive. This final article will examine the fourth factor necessary to elevate the role of the Human Resources Executive – “Elevating the People Initiatives”.

1. The Chief Human Resource Officer (CHRO) thinks strategically by ensuring that the resources under their responsibility are managed wisely;
2. The CHRO is seen as the “people” expert, not just the HR expert, and is seen by senior executives and the board of trustees as a sought-after advisor on human capital issues;
3. The CHRO has the expertise and ability to help the senior team manage and decide issues involving the overall success of the organization -- not just the success of specific human resource functions;
4. The CHRO has the political and persuasive skills to garner the support of the senior executive team to place specific “people” initiatives at the same value and importance level as financial, clinical, or quality initiatives.

### **Elevating the People Initiatives**

In previous articles we have discussed that traditionally Human Resource Executives in healthcare have not been viewed as a full peer to the other executives. They have typically been seen as an expert in the one specific area of human resources with issues that are typically less critical than other areas such as finance or patient care. In order to elevate important “people” initiatives to the same importance level that financial, clinical, or quality

initiatives are typically perceived, our MSA HR Capital experts have found that HR leaders must develop political knowledge of the organization and learn the art of persuasion.

### **Political Knowledge**

The political environment is different in every organization. Each executive and board member has specific agendas and different motivations, and alliances vary depending on the issue. Through interactions with hundreds of healthcare executive teams, we have observed the politics of influence and recognize which are effective at moving forward agendas and impacting the organization as a whole. Because "people" initiatives are more ambiguous and less measureable, the ability to elevate the important issues around the people of the organization is diminished when financial and other more "metric" issues dominate the conversation.

Typically, to gain more influence, there is an attempt to create more "metrics" for people strategies so they can be weighed against other initiatives. But as we discussed in the third article in this series, understanding individuals' motivations is key. HR leaders that take the time to observe the personalities, interactions, and the overall politics of the environment have an advantage in convincing others that the "people" initiatives are important and beneficial to the organization in many ways. Although "metrics" are important and do have value, because of the nature of people strategies, the metrics for them tend not to measure up to the metrics of other initiatives. By learning the personalities of the leadership team and understanding their dynamics, more influence is developed and the HR leader can determine the steps necessary to persuade the other executives.

### **Persuasive Skills**

Understanding the politics in the organization is only the first step in elevating the "people" initiatives to the level of clinical, financial, and quality initiatives. Once the HR leader has learned the players in the politics of the organization, he or she next must find ways to be more persuasive. Each individual is motivated by different items, and understanding those motivations is the key to influence. Most executives are motivated by the higher performance of the organization, but also understanding the alliances and motivations of executives and board members on a personal level can be vital.

Persuasive skills are varied. Some individuals are persuasive because of their manner of speaking and presence. Others are persuasive because they can build a solid case, explain it well, and convince people through logic and information. Credibility and integrity is also a key component of persuasion. A person with credibility, either earned or borrowed from another, is a step ahead in being able to convince others. Having a key leader 'lend' their credibility to the HR Executive helps establish a foundation for persuasion.

Some persuasive skills can be learned while others are innate. One persuasive skill that can be learned is determining others motivations and building your case to appeal to those motivations. For example, a key executive is interested in instituting a new quality initiative. If the HR leader understands that and can tie the arguments for creating a better on-boarding program for new hires to increasing the quality of patient care, the executive is more likely to see the value in the “people” initiatives.

## **Conclusion**

For an organization to become high performing, the HR leader must be viewed as a full member of the executive team. Having strength in the “people” areas of your healthcare organization is just as important as providing high quality patient care and performing well financially - the three go hand-in-hand. Organizations that commit to supporting their human capital have higher quality patient care and typically are more financially sound. HR leaders who can think strategically, are viewed by their peers as the “people expert”, are a sought-after “business partner”, and are able to elevate the “people” initiatives in their organization are instrumental in an organization’s ability to become a high performing organization with a higher percentage of engaged employees.

For years, as HR Executives, we have known that if we had a “seat” at the table, we could make a significant impact on the organization. By taking a planned and focused approach, with the goal to create more influence in the organization, not only will HR Executives help healthcare be more successful, but they will elevate the overall role of HR in healthcare.

## ***About Integrated Healthcare Strategies***

*Integrated Healthcare Strategies provides not-for-profit healthcare organizations with direct access to a comprehensive array of healthcare-specific services, delivered by professionals from the industry who understand the rigors of running a healthcare organization – from the lunchroom to the Board Room. Its client list is a “who’s who” of healthcare organizations including over 1200 major healthcare providers, 1,800 hospitals and 700 independent and affiliated medical groups. Integrated Healthcare Strategies specializes in the areas of physician strategy and compensation, employee compensation, executive compensation, human capital solutions, labor relations, leadership transition planning, executive search, employee surveys, performance management and board governance solutions.*

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