

The Mad Science of HR

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THE MAD SCIENCE OF HR

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Prologue: How to Organize Your HR



A Periodic Table of HR Elements

“In the periodic table, we find the beauty of simplicity and the complexity of the natural world.” -Dmitri Mendeleev

The periodic table of elements is the foundation of modern chemistry. It provides a record of all the known building blocks of the world around us. The tall tale goes that chemist Dmitri Mendeleev awoke one morning with the idea of the periodic table having come to him fully formed during unconsciousness. Mendeleev scurried to record the visuals and organizational paradigms before his waking mind forgot it all.

In a strange way, I understand what Mendeleev was feeling that brisk Russian morning in 1869. The idea of a Periodic Table of HR Elements was in my mind one morning not too long ago. It was almost like it was dropped in there with a software patch while I was in sleep mode. Much to my husband's annoyance, I sprang out of bed at 4:30a and got to work recording the shape and organization of the table.

Much like Mendeleev, I didn't trust my waking brain to hold on to the information for very long. I feared if I went back to sleep, I'd wake in a few hours with the strong feeling I had a brilliant idea but with no idea what the *idea* actually was. It's happened to me before...many times.

Obviously, my education and career in HR helped inform the expertise that went into creating the table, but so did the creativity of a friend, in a very round-about way. He was putting together a campaign setting for a tabletop roleplaying game and wanted to know the functions of Human Resources.

Now, for those of you unfamiliar with tabletop roleplaying game geeks, let me provide some comparisons to make this story seem less strange: the football fan and the couponers.

The Football Fan

As the football fan delves into their team stats with their fantasy football league, their enthusiasm becomes palpable. Each statistic analyzed and player performance dissected, they exude an infectious energy. Every touchdown scored, every yard gained, and every victory celebrated is met with fervent excitement, as they immerse themselves in the exhilarating realm where strategy meets sport, weaving narratives of triumph and defeat.

The Couponers

Each coupon clipped and every discount redeemed leads to eagerly shared tales of triumphs, their voices rising with excitement as they recount the incredible deals they've scored. It's a friendly competition, fueled by the thrill of the hunt and the satisfaction of stretching their budgets to the max. As they trade stories of slashed prices and unbelievable bargains, their laughter fills the air, creating a joyful atmosphere of camaraderie and shared achievement. In this moment, they're not just couponers; they're savvy savers reveling in the joys of frugality together.

Like these two disparate social groups, gaming nerds have their own niche passions that fuel conversation and creativity. If I were to follow the format above, I'd call us the world builders.

The World Builders

The enthusiasm of two nerds creating a world setting for a new RPG campaign is akin to master storytellers weaving a tapestry of imagination. Building lore and birthing civilizations from our minds. Made more enjoyable because it's a uniquely collaborative endeavor, world building is fueled by a shared passion for storytelling and the thrill of exploring uncharted territories. As they discuss fantastical landscapes, intricate histories, and memorable characters, their laughter fills the room, creating an atmosphere of boundless imagination and shared vision. In this moment, they're not just nerds; they're visionary architects of an epic adventure.

So, when my friend asked me to outline the areas of HR for his campaign's corporate hegemony, I immediately began scribbling out my ideas. It was an interesting challenge for me, to condense everything that HR is and does into a digestible list of explanation for my non-HR friend.

And it was FUN! He and I talked about how HR functions in reality and then had a blast coming up with ways to twist things to fit his horror theme. Gaming aside, my three pages of hand-

written notes describing my work became a typed organizational toolkit for me to use when assisting client organizations.

No HR department is the same except in that there is never a ‘perfect’ state, even with solid processes and dedicated HR professionals. Having a starting place, a way to organize the chaos into manageable buckets, has made a huge difference in my ability to identify areas of opportunity within the HR function of any given company.

Organization by Design

Organization is an exceedingly unique thing. What works for one person may not work for another. The goal of the Periodic Table of HR Elements isn’t to convince others to organize their tasks, or SOPs, or entire HR department exactly like I would.

Whether you are a seasoned HR professional, a small business owner, or an operator, you know your industry, geographic region, company, and employees better than me. The Periodic Table of HR Elements is a tool, a quick reference guide for *what* needs to be organized, not *how* it should be organized.

11 Hu The Human Element Human Resources Consulting 2018											
11 Re Recruiting											22 Tr Training
33 Co Compensation	44 Be Benefits	55 Sa Safety	66 Er Employee Relations	77 Ee Employee Engagement							
88 Pm Performance Management	99 Wc Workers' Compensation	1010 Sp Succession Planning	1111 Is Information Systems	1212 Cm Compliance							

Exploring Versus Experimenting

The primary function of each chapter is to introduce principles and concepts, like the lecture part of a science class. Exploring ideas through metaphors to help you understand the human resources landscape.

At the end of each chapter, you'll find a brief summary of key points along with an exercise to complete, and an action plan designed to help you apply the concepts immediately and effectively. Think of this as the lab class where you get to experiment with what you learned in the lecture.

Who Can Use This?

Whether you're building an HR system from scratch or refining one that's grown messy over time, this book gives you the space to think, plan, and build with intention.

This book was created for:

- **Small business owners** who wear the HR hat (among many others).
- **Office managers** or team leads managing people without a full HR department.
- **Solo HR practitioners** in growing companies that need to organize and document everything—without losing their minds.

The book is meant for you to use as it benefits you and your organization. Share it with your team and adapt the action planning to suit your needs.

Each organization is different. Be prepared to brainstorm ideas, discard things that don't work for you, and celebrate the gains you make—no matter how big or small.

How Long Does It Take?

Tackle the work on a timeline that works for you, in a way that fits your business's size, pace, and bandwidth. Take your time to train up to the marathon that is HR excellence!

100 Meter Sprints – If you need your HR organized in a short time frame, consider addressing one element a week until you get the basics set up and operating consistently.

1000 Meter Middle Distance Race – If your systems are up and running but need evaluation and improvement, organize the elements into four groups to address on a quarterly basis. Group the elements together based on what makes sense in your organization.

Q1: Recruiting, Training, Performance Management

Q2: Compensation, Benefits, Employee Engagement

Q3: Safety, Workers' Compensation, Compliance

Q4: Employee Relations, Succession Planning, Information Systems

Decathlon Events - Skip around to address the areas where you're currently facing the biggest challenges—then circle back as needed. Each section stands on its own, but together they can help you build a comprehensive, functional HR system.

Chapter 1: Recruiting



Our Friend Frank

"Beware; for I am fearless, and therefore powerful."

– Dr. Victor Frankenstein

As a human resources professional, I've often felt recruiting for employees is a lot like Dr. Frankenstein creating his monster, assembling individual elements to form a cohesive whole. Where our friend Frank collected body parts from various sources to construct his creature, we gather candidates with diverse skills and experiences to build effective teams within the company. Recruiting entails navigating intricate and interconnected webs of internal mechanisms and external environments.

Internally, there must be an organizational framework, a systematic approach akin to assembling parts of a creature. Company protocols should provide clear instruction on the replacement of authorized (also known as budgeted positions), much like swapping out malfunctioning limbs. Additionally, procedures must

be in place for the incorporation of new roles not originally envisioned, resembling the grafting of new organs onto an existing body, and for enlisting contract or temporary employees, similar to using a medical device or life support to sustain the body while it heals.

Externally, successful recruiting resembles seeking the elusive spark of life. The right candidates must be discovered with surgical precision amidst the labyrinth of the hiring landscape. Frank's story offers us more than metaphor material, however; it's a cautionary lesson for sourcing the right 'parts' in the right ways. In mad science and in recruiting, the importance of humility, foresight, and ethical responsibility cannot be over emphasized.

Humility

Recruiters who acknowledge the limits of their knowledge and abilities grant themselves the opportunity to seek input from others, recognize when mistakes have been made, and adapt to achieve success.

Foresight

Looking past the immediate to consider strategic, long-term impacts can give recruiters a huge advantage. By assessing candidates' fit within the company culture in addition to the traditional skills and abilities, recruiters can avoid unintended consequences and make more informed decisions.

Ethical Responsibility

Unlike Frank, who ignored the profound ethical questions of pushing the boundaries of scientific inquiry, recruiters must operate within ethical boundaries. All candidates should be treated with respect, fairness, and transparency throughout the recruitment process. This builds trust with candidates and contributes to a positive and sustainable company culture.

Key Points:

- The hiring process should be structured and transparent, as well as adaptable for both replacements and new roles.
- External recruiting is a precise, strategic search for candidates who align with long-term goals, not short term needs.
- Success in recruiting relies on humility, foresight, and strong ethical responsibility.

Exercise:

1. Select an open position in your organization. Create an ideal candidate profile using the “Frank” method:

First Impression: What does the ideal candidate have on their

resume? Are you looking for specific industry or role experience? Are there specific education or certification requirements?

Right Skills: What skill(s) does the ideal candidate have?

Abilities: What does the ideal candidate have to be able to do

(with or without accommodation)?

New or Not: Is your ideal candidate new to the organization or an

internal hire? Does the role call for fresh ideas or tribal knowledge?

Knowledge: What knowledge does the ideal candidate possess

and how do they demonstrate it? Is there a practical simulation or certification test?

Action Planning:

Answer the following questions to jump start your recruiting processes:

1. **Communication:** How are recruiting needs catalogued? What does the FRANK candidate look like and who is in charge of finding candidates?
2. **Questions:** What questions need to be asked in the interview(s)? Are there any department or role specific questions the hiring manager wants to ask?
3. **On-Boarding:** What happens when the ideal candidate is found? Who offers the job and who works with the candidate through the process of background checks (if applicable), drug testing, and new hire orientation?