

Dear Growing HR Leader,

I've been thinking about you and where you're headed, and there's something I discovered early but wish someone had articulated for me much sooner: Don't aspire to be the best HR leader in the room. Aspire to be one of the best business leaders in the room.

I know you love HR because you care about people. You want them to feel valued, supported and happy at work. Hold onto that. It will make you a better CHRO. But as you climb, your thinking has to get bigger. Businesses exist to create value and make money. Profit isn't a dirty word. It allows companies to grow, invest and employ people.

When I first went into HR, I'd tell people what I did and inevitably hear, "Oh, so you hire and fire people?" Yep. 40-60 hours of work a week summed up nicely. 😊 Even today, I occasionally hear accomplished executives call HR "personnel." I've learned not to be offended. Instead, I think:

Show them.

Don't let someone else's limited understanding of HR become the limit of your contribution. Learn the business. Know how it makes money and where it loses money. Understand the customer, the financials, margin, labor costs, productivity and growth. Then connect your work to those things.

Not someday when someone gives you permission or hands you the CHRO title.

Now:

Reduced turnover? What did it save in hard costs? Better staffing? What happened to sales per employee or customer experience? Stronger leadership development? What changed in the business because leadership got better? And if nobody has built the scorecard connecting people to performance, build the damn thing. 😊

You don't have to choose between caring about people and caring about performance. Keep asking, "What does this mean for our people?" Just add, "And what does this mean for the business?"

What got you here matters. Honor it. But it won't be enough to get you where you're going. Start practicing for the bigger seat now. Sit differently in the room. Ask different questions. Learn things that aren't "HR." Get comfortable with the numbers.

You're not an HR leader who happens to work in a business. You're a business leader whose expertise happens to be people practices.

Keep the heart. Build the commercial muscle. You'll need both at the top. See you there.

Monica

+28%
Employee
Engagement

+22%
Productivity

+18%
Revenue
per Employee

PEOPLE
STRATEGY
FUELS A
BRIGHTER
TOMORROW