

# Empowering vs. Enabling

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What Belongs to HR, What Belongs to Leaders  
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Leaders... Don't rely on HR.

I'm not saying HR isn't reliable. I'm saying it's not their job to DO the performance communication, the hiring, the firing, the policy setting.

HR—at its best—is your "wing-man", not your hired gun.

Get in there:

- \* Have frequent conversations about performance
- \* About what's working and what's not
- \* Set policy
- \* Delete policies
- \* Have hiring and firing conversations (dare I say... one-on-one)

By all means, consult with HR, early and often.

And then be the agent of action and the carrier of your relationships.

Leaders and HR alike often forget this ideal configuration.

Abdicating leadership to HR erodes relationships and culture.

Or... Am I wrong?



588

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Share an example of something you were asked to do that really belonged to the leader.

Category	HR	Leaders
<b>Talent Acquisition &amp; Hiring</b>	Build recruiting systems; ensure compliance; provide interview tools/training	Own hiring decisions; define role-specific competencies; actively interview candidates
<b>Performance &amp; Feedback</b>	Design performance systems; train leaders in feedback models; support escalations	Deliver performance conversations; address underperformance; recognize and coach daily
<b>Culture &amp; Engagement</b>	Develop engagement frameworks; advise leaders; track and report trends	Model culture daily; foster trust, inclusion, and belonging; take accountability for team morale
<b>Employee Relations &amp; Compliance</b>	Ensure compliance; investigate escalated issues; provide fair practice frameworks	Address issues early; uphold policies consistently; maintain open dialogue with employees
<b>Learning &amp; Development</b>	Provide L&D strategy, resources, and leadership programs	Coach and mentor; create stretch opportunities; support continuous learning
<b>Strategic Alignment</b>	Align people strategy with business goals; advise on workforce planning; guide change management	Translate strategy into team execution; champion HR initiatives; own retention/performance outcomes
<b>Pay &amp; Compensation</b>	Design compensation philosophy and structures; benchmark market data; ensure equity/compliance; manage merit cycles	Make pay decisions within framework and budget; advocate for fairness; communicate decisions transparently



+ What management responsibilities belong to HR versus other leaders? |





Share some language you use  
to redirect responsibility back  
to the leader.

# 5 Key Takeaways

courtesy of Amanda Mayo



# Frame HR through the business lens

- Don't lead with HR jargon. Lead with the business: operations, client experience, branding, fiscal outcomes. That's what earns respect and credibility in the room.

*Example:* I will never say, “From an HR perspective” in a meeting — ever. I frame everything in terms of operations, clients, or fiscal outcomes.

**Practical Action:** Replace “from an HR perspective” with “from a operations perspective” in your next leadership meeting.



# How you show up shapes how you're treated

- The language you use, your discernment of what's important now vs. later, and whether you're solving problems for the business — that's what positions you as a partner, not a function.

**Practical Action:** Before you walk into a meeting, write down two questions: “How will I show up as a peer and partner today?” and “How will I add value to outcomes?”

# Leadership presence is learned, not assigned

- Confidence, courage, and curiosity aren't taught in HR school — but they can be built. Every conversation is a chance to practice stepping into your presence, and when you do, you strengthen not only your leaders but yourself.

**Practical Action:** Practice presence in small moments — volunteer to voice the first perspective in a meeting or ask the tough clarifying question others are avoiding.

# Be the problem solver, not the problem spotter

- HR earns trust when we bring solutions, not just surface issues. Spotting problems is easy; partnering on solutions makes us indispensable.

**Practical Action:** The next time you raise a challenge, pair it with at least one possible solution or option to explore.

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# Practice continuous business curiosity

- The best HR leaders know the business inside and out: market, competition, client experience, employee experience. Your curiosity will build your credibility and influence.

**Practical Action:** Set up one 30-minute coffee or Zoom with a leader outside HR — in operations, finance, or sales — and just ask, “What’s keeping you up at night?, How are you thinking about your team / department / the market / our clients?”



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