
Book review: HR from the outside in: six competencies for the future of human resources

by *Dave Ulrich, Jon Younger, Wayne Brockbank and Mike Ulrich*

McGraw-Hill Education

New York, USA

2012

336 pages

ISBN-10: 0071802665

ISBN-13: 978-0071802666

Review DOI [10.1108/RAMJ-01-2025-346](https://doi.org/10.1108/RAMJ-01-2025-346)

Introduction

The world of human resources (HR) is dynamic, and therefore, as a professional, one needs to be updated about trends and strategies in the field. One such resource in this regard has been the book “*HR from the Outside In*,” written by Dave Ulrich, Jon Younger, Wayne Brockbank and Mike Ulrich. This is an all-inclusive book detailing HR practices and their impacts on organizations. This article will give a review of the book, including its citation, analysis of the content, significance of the book, relevance of the subject to the audience, methodology and sources, critique, recommendation and conclusion.

Citation and price

“*HR from the Outside In*” was published by McGraw-Hill Education in 2012 and is available in both hardcover and e-book formats. The book is fairly priced to be within reach for professionals, students or any other person who would like to learn more about the role that HR plays in making organizations a success.

Analysis

The authors of “*HR from the Outside In*” describe a more holistic view of the function and say that HR professionals should embrace practices in alignment with the general business strategy. The authors focus on how HR has become transformed from an administrative role to one deeply involved in the strategy for business success. The different strands of research findings, case studies and practical insights have been admirably woven together to create a broad framework under which HR professionals may work towards effectiveness.

Importance of the book for HR professionals

This book is important for HR professionals in as much as it challenges certain traditionally held conventions of HR practice and propounds new strategies by which departments of HR

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can be rebuilt as strategic assets. The authors underline the big role HR can play in creating value for customers, investors and communities by focusing on external factors. The book does focus on the fact that most HR professionals have to change their outlook toward an external orientation and align HR practice with corporate objectives.

Relevance

“HR from the Outside In” is highly relevant for the dynamic business environment of today’s organizations, which are increasingly recognizing the strategic imperatives of human capital. It addresses exactly what HR professionals face in their struggle to adapt to changing business landscapes and gives practical guidance on how to effectively meet the challenges of these changes. The book looks at a number of realms of HR practice, among them talent management, leadership development and organizational culture, hence giving a few valuable insights to HR practitioners at any level.

Target audience

The book’s audience primarily includes HR professionals such as HR managers, business partners and executives who are interested in enhancing their understanding of the strategic role of HR. Likewise, individuals undertaking HR or related studies will find this book quite useful in deepening their knowledge of current HR practices. In the same light, the authors’ writing style and examples used make it easier for readers to understand with a broad category of audiences.

Sources and methodology

The authors have followed an aggressive research methodology, combined with academic research, case studies and practical experience. This enables every HR practice to include a holistic view since different viewpoints are considered and substantiated by data-driven insights. It also contains interviews with many HR leaders across industries, thereby enriching the content with real-world experiences and best practices.

Critique

While *“HR from the Outside In”* is admirably detailed in its consideration of HR practices, this sometimes feels overwhelming because of the extent of its coverage. The book would have been more readable if its chapters had been more succinctly written. Finally, the book felt a bit saturated with a bias toward strategic HR, which may not fully resonate with smaller organizations having fewer resources.

Recommendation

Despite some minor flaws, *“HR from the Outside In”* should be read by every HR professional interested in raising the role of HR management within organizations. It offers great insights and very practical tools to help HR practitioners align strategies to the external environment toward organizational success. It is highly recommended for additional insights into today’s human resource practices and their impact on business outcomes.

Conclusion

“HR from the Outside In” is both an all-inclusive and a deeply insightful volume that challenges the very core of traditional HR practice and gives a strategic angle to HR management. It has made the HR professionals’ quest toward effectiveness all the more valuable by aligning HR with the external environment dimension. The authors thus

provide a roadmap for rising to a changing dynamic in the business world and creating a bigger platform for HR professionals to participate in and contribute to the success of any organization.

Sachin Kulkarni

*Department of Management, Lexicon Management Institute of Leadership and Excellence,
Pune, India*