

THE MAKING OF TWENTY-FIRST-CENTURY HR: AN ANALYSIS OF THE CONVERGENCE OF HRM, HRD, AND OD

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Twenty-first-century HR is emerging to uniquely combine activities and processes of human resource management (HRM), human resource development (HRD), and organization development (OD)—three fields that “grew up” distinct from each other. Contributing strategically to organizations demands that HRM, HRD, and OD coordinate, partner, and think innovatively about how they relate and how what they do impacts people and organizations. An analysis of the evolutions of these fields helps to explain why the distinctions between them continue to blur and how the similarities among them provide the necessary synergy for HR to be a truly valued organizational partner. © 2004 Wiley Periodicals, Inc.

Introduction

It has become a common refrain to hear the many challenges facing organizations today. These include globalization, the pressure for speed and innovation, the transition to a service economy with its extraordinary emphasis on customers, the pressure for financial performance, the impact of technology and e-business, and changing workforce demographics. While this list is by no means comprehensive, it provides the context that is propelling profound change in modern organizations.

Perhaps the change that has most impacted organizations in the past decade has been the growing realization that people are an organization's primary source of

competitive advantage. It is now widely accepted that an organization's "...success is determined by decisions employees make and behaviors in which they engage" (Mello, 2002, p. 4). It has never been more important for organizations to foster and tap the strategic potential of people. Managing people as an organization's primary asset has inspired HR to become increasingly more effective at developing programs and policies that leverage talent to align with organizational competencies and at executing organizational strategy.

MacDonald (2003) states that "creating the next generation work environment—highly collaborative and capable of not just fostering, but also encouraging, the instant, seamless movement of ideas and expertise—

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will present both intellectual and technical challenges for us as professionals” (p. 262). HR faces these challenges as it contemplates organizational strategy and workforce implications. It also, however, must reflect on these challenges as they relate to HR itself. The HR function and its processes have changed as a direct result of these organizational dynamics. The next-generation HR is emerging as a field that uniquely combines activities and processes that have traditionally been associated with human resource management (HRM), human resource development (HRD), and organization development (OD)—three fields that “grew up” distinct from each other and, in many cases, separate in their theories and practices (Grieves & Redman, 1999; Sammut, 2001).

Today’s requirement to contribute strategically to organizations demands that HRM, HRD, and OD coordinate, partner, and innovatively think about how they relate and how what they do impacts people in organizations. An analysis of the evolutions of these three fields helps to explain why the distinctions among the three areas continue to blur and how the similarities among them provide the necessary synergy for HR to be a truly valued organizational partner. The purpose of this article is to contextualize the emergence of twenty-first-century HR (as a meta-profession, if you will, that can accommodate multiple fields under its umbrella) in a historical and comparative context. To do this, the evolutions of HRM, HRD, and OD are traced from their formal and distinctive beginnings in the early-to-mid-1900s through the dawn of the twenty-first century where we see great convergence. Implications for HR and its professionals are then explored.

Methodology and Conceptual Framework

Our approach for this historical analysis entailed tracing patterns of events, forces, and ways of thinking that impacted the development of HRM, HRD, and OD, and conducting a critical analysis of their origins and consequences (Marius, 1995). We then sought a descriptive frame to assist us in organizing the reporting of our findings, which was aligned with prior literature on HR evolutions in the

field. In conducting a historical review of HRM in American industry, Lawrence (1985) found that there was no generally recognized framework for describing the development of HRM in the United States. After reviewing a number of current HR texts and articles, we selected Brockbank’s (1999) model, entitled *Dimensions of Competitive Advantage for HR Activities* (see Figure 1), to organize our findings, as this framework was designed specifically for HR, incorporated the concept of increasing competitive advantage that is predominant in the field today, and, most importantly, enabled us to express these trends on a historical continuum.

Brockbank’s (1999) framework characterizes professional HR practices along two sets of dimensions: (a) operational or strategic and (b) reactive or proactive. In addition, Brockbank reconfigured the matrix presented in Figure 1 to create a timeline of increasing competitive advantage along which we can further understand and assess the progress of HR (see Figure 2).

Although we found our historical analysis to best align with the progression of Brockbank’s framework, the distinction made between operational and strategic levels of HR is also congruent with other models that are extensively used in the HR field. In Ulrich’s (1997) four-factor HR roles model, which has received considerable attention in the literature, the administrative expert and employee champion roles have a day-to-day/operational focus and are, therefore, aligned with Brockbank’s operational (reactive and proactive) quadrants. Similarly, the strategic partner and

Strategic	Support strategy	Create future, strategic alternatives
	Operational	Implement the basics
	Reactive	Proactive

* Slightly adapted from Brockbank (1999)

Figure 1. Brockbank’s (1999) Dimensions of Competitive Advantage.*

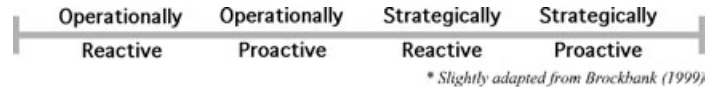


Figure 2. Continuum of Competitive Advantage.*

change agent roles, as defined by Ulrich (1997), have a future/strategic focus and most closely align with the strategically reactive and proactive quadrants. Brockbank further argues that combining the dimensions of strategic/operational and reactive/proactive (e.g., being proactive may look different when it is done in operational ways versus strategic ways) can help the HR field organize its thinking about the past, present, and future. We suggest that Brockbank's framework is also useful in thinking about the related disciplines of HRD and OD and, overlaid against an analysis of HRM, provides us with unique insights into the forces and trends that are affecting all three fields.

Brockbank (1999) describes the activities that take place in the various quadrants as follows. Operational activities are generally routine and focus on things that must be done for the organization to operate on a daily basis. Strategic activities are those that are organizationally comprehensive, planned, integrate multiple facets, and are considered high, long-term "value-added" in terms of their contribution to business success. Reactive activities are in response to a need of the organization, while proactive activities involve the creation of operational improvements or strategic alternatives. Brockbank demonstrates that HRM's focus has evolved over time—progressing along a continuum from operationally reactive to operationally proactive to strategically reactive to strategically proactive. In that progression, he argues, HRM has provided increasingly higher value to organizations and, thereby, has increased its contribution to organizations' competitive advantage. This does not imply, however, that various practices within all four quadrants are still not necessary and, in many contexts, quite valued.

Evolutions of HRM, HRD, and OD

The following section traces the evolutions of HRM, HRD, and OD as three distinctive

fields to unfold their unique, yet strikingly similar, histories and to explore the trends currently affecting each field. To do this, an extensive literature review of over 50 articles and chapters was done to briefly and succinctly chronicle each field by focusing on dominant trends in each field during the past 50-plus years. Brockbank's (1999) analysis began to unfold the history/trends of HRM (which he called HR). This analysis expands upon that chronicle, and also adds analyses of both HRD and OD for an even more holistic view of what we observe to be the emergence of a more integrated twenty-first-century HR.

Although there remains considerable dispute as to whether OD is a distinctive profession in its own right (Church, 2001; Grieves & Redman, 1999; Weidner & Kulick, 1999), the evolution and practices of HRD and OD as two distinctive emerging fields were investigated separately for this article. This was done for a few reasons. First, each of these fields has a distinctive history that must be analyzed separately to fully understand its unique lineages. Second, it is only relatively recently (within the last 15–20 years) that these two fields have often been operationalized together in practice. As this analysis will show, there is ample evidence that OD did, and continues to, emerge as a distinctive profession, has not *yet* been subsumed by its close relatives (such as HRM or HRD), and, in fact, has been a critical contributor to the strategic advancement of the family of practices that comprise strategically proactive philosophy and action in organizations today.

Since the evolutions of HRM, HRD, and OD did not necessarily occur during the same time spans, we focused on the operational definitions of each of Brockbank's (1999) quadrants and provide our interpretation of the time span during which each field was characterized by these dimensions. The activities that characterize each field during each phase are also summarized and presented in Figure 3.

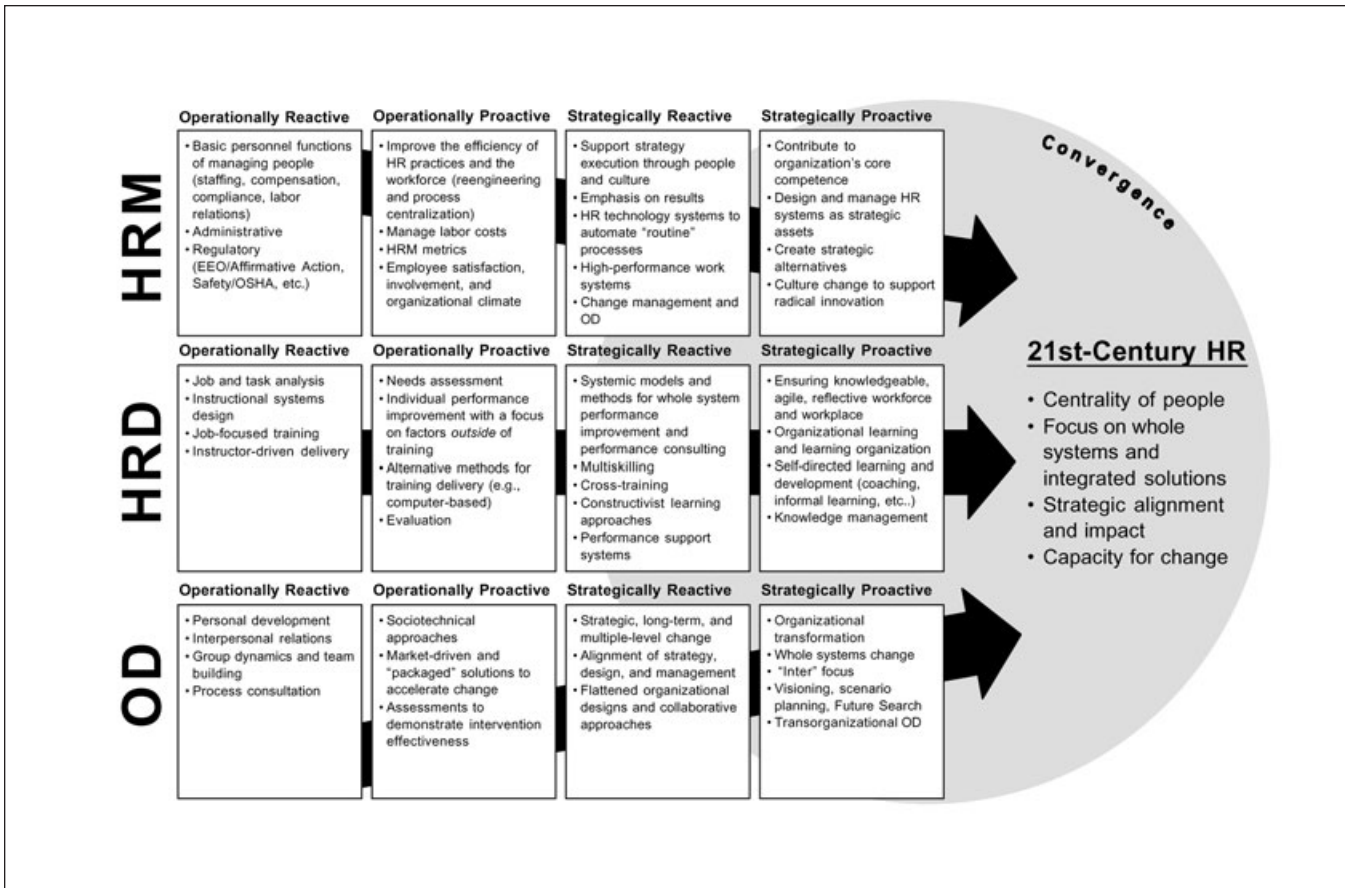


Figure 3. The Evolutions of HRM, HRD, and OD: Toward a Twenty-First-Century HR.

Operationally Reactive

During the First World War and in the following decade, the U.S. workforce experienced major changes. The shift from craft to massed labor, concentrated immigration and, in large part, the organizing efforts of the union movement produced the need for a "personnel" function to manage these labor issues. Wage controls and the labor demands of World War II created additional pressure on organizations and, after the war, an entire union-management system was established in response to the labor movement's continued strength (Freedman, 1990; Lawrence, 1985). By the 1960s, organizations had also recognized the need to establish specialized employee relations programs for their nonunion workforce. In addition, a significant increase in government regulations affecting the employment relationship required organizations to develop policies and

procedures to ensure regulatory compliance (Dyer & Holder, 1988; Freedman, 1990). Meanwhile, the organization itself became increasingly important in the day-to-day lives of U.S. workers. These kinds of dynamics led to the formal establishment and growth of what we currently call HR.

The State of HRM (Beginnings—Mid-1980s)

Since its inception as a separate function established to manage labor issues, personnel's role has grown to include the basic administrative activities associated with people management in organizations (Brockbank, 1999). The role of personnel during this period focused on the transactional components of the various functions—including benefits, employment/recruitment, compensation, EEO/affirmative action, safety and OSHA compliance, labor relations, and training and development. The performance

of these functions was technical in nature. Employment planning was concerned with forecasting work. Labor relations focused on administering collective bargaining agreements. Selection, training, performance appraisal, and compensation emphasized individual jobs and descriptions (Beaumont, 1992). These functions were viewed as “disassociated programs and practices” (Dyer & Holder, 1988, p. 1-14) and were not seen as part of a broader HR strategy.

The State of HRD (Beginnings–Late 1970s). Training has literally existed throughout all recorded history of the human race. It has progressed through key phases such as apprenticeship and craft guilds, the emergence of corporation schools in the early 1900s, the focus of (and government funding for) vocational education and military training in the United States, through today’s modern-day management (Miller, 1996; Swanson & Torracco, 1994). It was during the industrial era that training became a central feature in modern organizations with organizations focusing on the “basics” of creating and integrating components of the instructional process and adult learning into a coherent system (Clark, 1999). The term *human resource development* (HRD) was defined by Leonard Nadler (1970) as “a series of organized activities conducted within a specific time and designed to produce behavioral change” (p. 3). Throughout this period the terms *training*, *training and development*, and *HRD* were used almost interchangeably and focused exclusively on organized learning experiences.

By the early 1980s, training departments in organizations had become quite common, as organizations wanted workers trained more efficiently and cost-effectively. Training during this era was predominantly based on perceived and short-term organizational needs. Task analysis was common, and training was closely linked to a person’s job. Training in organizations was instructor-driven and -led, and firmly entrenched in behaviorism, which emphasized behavioral changes resulting from learning. Training was also beginning to be channeled toward management and supervisors to support their central role in the environment outside of the classroom (Harris, 2000).

The State of OD (Beginnings–Mid- to Late 1970s). The field of OD was founded on the strong humanistic values of its early founders, who aimed to improve the conditions of people’s lives in organizations by applying behavioral science knowledge and interventions (see Cummings & Worley, 2001; French & Bell, 2000; Sanzgiri & Gottlieb, 1992, for reviews of these early contributors and foundational ideas). These early founders were steeped in the T-group movement, which focused heavily on group dynamics, and the survey research and feedback movement. These movements utilized methods that also ultimately fed the development of action research, a methodology that is now central to many processes in OD.

However, early OD interventions can be categorized as primarily focusing on individuals and interpersonal relations. OD was established as a social philosophy that emphasized a long-term orientation, the applied behavioral sciences, external and process-oriented consultation, change managed from the top, a strong emphasis on action research, and a focus on creating change in collaboration with managers (Sanzgiri & Gottlieb, 1992). Burke (1995) states that “in the mid-1970s, OD was still associated with T-groups, participative management and consensus, Theory Y, and self-actualization ... the ‘soft’ human, touchy-feely kinds of activities” (p. 8). OD during this time was practiced predominantly by external consultants who worked with top-level managers.

Operationally Reactive Period Analysis. During this evolutionary phase, all three fields were focused on those activities that needed to be accomplished for the organization to effectively operate on a daily basis and were in response to needs identified by the organization. Skills required of these professionals to perform these activities were both technical and interpersonal. HRM’s engagement in transactional and administrative activities was directly in response to the organizing efforts of the labor unions and the pressure of increased government regulation. HRD professionals were predominantly engaged in training activities based on short-term organizational needs and designed to elicit behavioral change linked to a person’s job. Similarly, OD was fo-

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cused on individuals and interpersonal relationships—the basic activities associated with human relations in organizations. These activities contributed to the organization's ability to respond to employee needs during this period.

Operationally Proactive

In the 1980s, factors such as deregulation and imports introduced new competitive pressures on organizations, triggering a shift in priorities toward internal business issues (Beaumont, 1992; Dyer & Holder, 1988). Organizations during this era were greatly influenced by global competition and total quality management (TQM; Freedman, 1990). Workforce unionization levels, particularly in the private sector, began to decline and the United States saw relative growth in the service, white-collar employment sector. The recession of 1991–1992, along with recognition of the high costs of the hierarchical structure of many companies, resulted in a reduction of staff functions and a strong focus on becoming more flexible, responsive, and productive (Brockbank, 1999).

The State of HRM (Late 1980s–Early 1990s). This time period was characterized by a shift from the administrative and transactional focus of the personnel department to a focus on improving the efficiency of HR practices. Activities included outsourcing, reengineering of HRM processes, transferring the responsibility for employee transactions to the line managers as well as employees, and the centralization of transaction processing through the establishment of HR service centers (Brockbank, 1999). Efficiency was also stressed in terms of HRM's practices with the workforce. The emphasis was on providing flexible and innovative alternatives to manage labor costs while increasing the efficiency and productivity of employees. These included practices such as purchasing of services, restructuring, downsizing, utilization of contingent labor, and incentive-based compensation. HRM was increasingly involved with personnel reductions and reorganizations (Freedman, 1990). Metrics were developed to measure the productivity of the various HR functional areas (Brockbank,

1999), and HR professionals were expected to assess the cost implications of their work. There was also an increase in practices designed to enhance the organization's knowledge of internal employee satisfaction and organizational climate (Beaumont, 1992; Brockbank, 1999) as well as to strengthen employees' involvement in the organization.

The State of HRD (Late 1970s–Late 1980s). During this period, we saw an increasing convergence between training and OD. Trainers became interested in training methods emerging out of OD and they discovered that their behaviorist philosophy (with its focus on the environment outside of training) was congruent with OD professionals who were applying interventions to increasingly complex levels of organizational systems (Miller, 1996). New methodologies for individual performance improvement began to emerge (Gilbert, 1978), and there was increasing focus on how to enhance an individual's environment and foster those factors that support a person applying newly learned skills on the job.

The pragmatism that was affecting HRM and OD also spurred developments in training around needs assessment, task analysis, evaluation, and return-on-investment. Competency-based learning came into vogue as a way to focus on critical components of the job and reduce unnecessary training. Behavioral modeling became even more popular in the 1980s and continues to be a mainstay of many training designs (Miller, 1996). Trainees also began to receive training via computers as instructional designers worked to leverage technology to create designs that were interactive and learner-centered as well as more time- and cost-efficient.

The State of OD (Mid- to Late 1970s–Mid- to Late 1980s). In the late 1970s, a new pragmatism emerged in OD (Sanzgiri & Gottlieb, 1992). First was the rise of sociotechnical and technostructural approaches that had been a vital part of early OD. These approaches were extended and operationalized to expand OD's focus further beyond individual-level job design (Tichy, 1983). This resulted in larger-scale and longer-term projects and shifted attention beyond the individual and workgroups

to the larger work context. By the mid-1980s, an analysis showed that OD textbooks dedicated almost two-thirds of their diagnostic chapters to organizational-level issues rather than those at the individual and group levels (Brown & Covey, 1987).

It is also evident during this period that there were “market pressures to make the field more tools- and technology-driven and more responsive to pragmatic needs of the corporate world” (Sanzgiri & Gottlieb, 1992, p. 61). Emphasis was placed on accelerating phases of change and, as a result, there was a marked increase in packaged and prescriptive solutions, tools, and techniques. The OD consultant began to change from a nondirective, process-oriented practitioner to an authoritative specialist (Burke, 1995) as the tension between the humanistic concerns that founded OD and the “bottom line” grew. There was also increased pressure for OD to demonstrate its effectiveness and a surge in publications, assessments, and tools to improve the link between OD interventions and organizational results.

Operationally Proactive Period Analysis. Continuous improvement, efficiency, and cost-effectiveness characterized the activities of all three fields during this operationally proactive stage. HRM’s activities were focused on improving the efficiency of HRM practices through outsourcing, reengineering, transferring of transactional work to line managers, and developing HR metrics to measure productivity. HRD began to look at new methodologies for individual performance improvement and focused on enhancing an individual’s environment in order to support the application of newly learned behavior (i.e., improved on-the-job performance). OD shifted their focus to the larger work context and responded to increased pressure to facilitate faster change processes and link OD initiatives with business results. Each field, while still operational in focus, was actively engaged in enhancing and measuring its activities and determining the most cost-effective methods of operation. While all three fields continued to emphasize technical expertise (the “basics” of the respective work), it was apparent that a broader business perspec-

tive was increasingly necessary and that HR professionals needed to assess the cost and effectiveness of various HR decisions.

Strategically Reactive

During this period, many organizations recognized that human capital was central to competitive advantage. Organizations faced many challenges including increased globalization, the impact of technology, the need to simultaneously manage costs and growth, the rapid pace of change, and the need to refocus employee activities on the customer (Ulrich, 1997). As a result, the strategic management of people and how they work emerged as essential to sustained competitive advantage (Pfeffer, 1995). Although continuing to look for ways to provide the “basics” more efficiently, professionals during this period emphasized “supporting the execution of tactics that drive long-term strategies and developing the cultural and technical capabilities necessary for long-term success” (Brockbank, 1999, p. 342).

The State of HRM (Early 1990s–Current). HRM’s primary role was to add value by aligning its people strategies in support of the organization’s business strategies. This included working to establish a desired culture that would support competitive advantage and designing HR practices (such as competency assessment, diversity initiatives, work-life balance, and total reward systems) that would foster this culture. HRM also began a foray into change management and organization development activities in support of the implementation of the strategic direction (Brockbank, 1999).

The continued development of HR technology allowed line managers to actively handle more of the tasks related to recruitment, salary administration, and succession planning (Patel, 2002), thus freeing up HRM’s time to assume more strategic roles and to work toward garnering a “seat at the table.” For instance, much research was conducted on establishing the empirical link between HR strategies, systems, practices, and business financial performance (Becker & Gerhart, 1996; Becker & Huselid, 1998; De-

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laney & Huselid, 1996; Huselid, 1995). This further supported the importance of HRM's business partner role and emphasized the potential of high-performance work systems as an inimitable strategic asset in organizations. Competencies in business knowledge, delivery of HR, and management of change were identified as key to HRM's success (Ulrich, Brockbank, Yeung, & Lake, 1995).

The State of HRD (Late 1980s–Current). The developments of the 1980s led to what can now be viewed as a bit of an identity crisis and, perhaps, a splintering within training/HRD. The term *HRD* had been thrown about for nearly 15 years, but in the 1980s, over 11 alternative definitions were forwarded in the literature (see Weinberger, 1998). The capstone definition that has “stuck” through today resulted from McLagan's (1989) landmark study of HRD practice during the 1980s and defined HRD as “the integrated use of training and development, career development, and organization development to improve individual and organizational effectiveness” (p. 7). Phillips (1999) refers to this shift toward effectiveness and performance improvement as an extremely critical one—in paradigm, processes, practices, and procedures. During the early-to-mid-1990s, the literature on performance consulting (Robinson & Robinson, 1995) and performance improvement burgeoned, while the field of human performance technology (Stolovich & Keeps, 1992) gained a growing presence. Individual-level performance improvement models alone became insufficient while new, more systemic models of performance improvement emerged (Rummler & Brache, 1995; Swanson, 1994).

Meanwhile, outsourcing of more traditional forms of training (i.e., the basics) became increasingly prevalent while organizations asked internal HRD professionals to act as brokers of learning services and focus on strategic alignment and more systemic interventions. This enhanced strategic focus led to innovations in multiskilling and cross-training, cross-cultural and global training, and an increased emphasis on “soft” skills training (group dynamics, interpersonal relations, and systems thinking). There were also major innovations within training and instructional

design—including more constructivist approaches to designing learning environments, hypertext and hypermedia, and uses of technologies for e-learning (McNeil, 2002). Rapid prototyping response and delivery systems were developed to meet organizations' demands for more efficiently designed and just-in-time training. HRD and instructional systems design (ISD) professionals involved in this kind of work were increasingly becoming involved in utilizing technology for job supports, integrated performance support, and expert systems (Sleight, 1993).

The State of OD (Mid-1980s–Current). Beckhard's work during the 1960s on strategic change and open systems planning produced the need for a strategic perspective from OD (Cummings & Worley, 2001) and ushered in an increasingly “holistic and open systems view of organizations” (Swanson & Holton, 2001). Central to these models is the assumption that strategic and systemic change involves alignment with strategy, design, and management at multiple levels of the organization (including culture) and comprehensive change processes (including reward systems, management structures, process interventions, and information systems). This approach emphasized improving an organization's fit between its technical, political, and cultural systems. During this period, OD professionals were also helping to facilitate the development and implementation of strategy with their clients. Weidner & Kulick (1999) characterized the talk of many OD professionals as “if it's not strategic, if it's not long-term, if it's not working at the levels of a system, then it's not organization development” (p. 347). During the 1980s, OD professionals were pivotal in heightening attention around organizational culture. They identified culture as critically important in dealing with increasingly large and more complex change as well as a primary mechanism through which strategic design was carried out (Sashkin & Burke, 1990). OD professionals also became involved in assisting organizations in coping with the alignment of multiple cultures as a consequence of mergers/acquisitions and/or significant reorganizations.

More traditional interventions such as conflict management and team building were recast to be aligned with strategic imperatives resulting from either planned or emergent strategy or new organizational forms that tended toward flattened hierarchies and collaborative approaches. In addition, OD professionals were instrumental in the TQM movement that swept the United States during the 1980s, especially in their contributions around decentralized management of change and self-regulating or self-managed work teams and quality circles. OD professionals were encouraged to be more strategic and to more effectively relate OD skills to the changing competitive context of the organization and its members (Jelinek & Litterer, 1988). As a result, OD professionals were increasingly internal to the organization (Sammut, 2001) and supplemented traditional skills with more emphasis on business literacy, competitive strategy, finance, marketing, information systems, and process design.

Strategically Reactive Period Analysis. During this period, we see an increasing emphasis on the strategic alignment and positioning of each of the three emerging professions. This is not surprising given the clear shift toward a resource-based view of the organization (Barney, 2001; Wright, Dunford, & Snell, 2001) and important innovations of the day such as Prahalad & Hamel's (1990) ideas on the roots of the core competence of organizations. Each field turned its attention to aligning its interventions to strategy. In most cases, this was reactive in the sense that the strategy was often delivered to HRM, HRD, and OD for these professions to "react to." Business literacy, change management, and strategic thinking were identified as the competencies needed for these professions to effectively align their interventions with organizational requirements. We also see during this period that each field had to become more systematic in what they do to accomplish their goals. This included a clear emphasis on demonstrating the effectiveness and impact of interventions. Most importantly, each field had to adopt a more systemic view of the organization and incorporate this view as a basic assumption underlying their interventions.

Strategically Proactive

The rate of change for organizations continues to rapidly accelerate. Societal and demographic changes are fostering globalization, greater diversity, and the increased impact of science and technology on our work and personal lives. A major shift in geopolitics has caused networks and alliances to burgeon and has also created uncertainty (Mello, 2002; Patel, 2002). These dynamics demand that organizations continue to innovate, find ways to reduce costs, and be more flexible in developing practices that create competitive advantage (Brockbank, 1999).

The State of HRM (Late 1990s–Current). This new role for HRM involves creating future strategic alternatives for the organization. HRM must develop distinctive people practices to create core competencies that translate into business strategies and help to differentiate an organization's products and services (Cappelli & Crocker-Hefter, 1996). The motto for the new HRM role is "helping to set the agenda" (Bates, 2002). Brockbank (1999) suggests that HRM can evidence this strategically proactive role by (a) enhancing the innovation capacity of the firm; (b) being involved in each phase of the merger and acquisition process; and (c) linking internal human capabilities with the requirements of the external market. HRM must design and manage its systems as strategic assets, focus on the development of strategic competencies, and utilize a systems perspective as it works to develop strategic alternatives and new business opportunities (Becker, Huselid, Pickus, & Spratt, 1997). In order to be a driver of strategy, HRM must be engaged in creating institutional change capacity, identifying social trends impacting future business opportunities, and building organizational cultures that can accomplish radical innovation (Brockbank, 1999).

The State of HRD (Mid-1990s–Current). The strategically proactive HRD roles of the next decade and beyond revolve around ensuring a knowledgeable, competent, agile, and reflective workforce that utilizes learning to capitalize on emerging opportunities (Torraco & Swanson, 1995). In response, HRD has been

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an important contributor in the development of concepts around organizational learning (Dixon, 1994), and various powerful models for creating a learning organization have emerged (Marquardt, 1995; Senge, 1990; Watkins & Marsick, 1993). It is possible that this focus on organizational learning has the potential to be the hallmark of a strategically proactive HRD that features generative learning as central in creating future strategic alternatives. Other prominent trends in this same vein include emerging foci on self-directed learning, informal learning (Marsick & Watkins, 1990), personalized individual learning and development plans, and coaching.

There has also been increased attention on HRD implications for knowledge management systems designed to capture, store, and share learning as well as on an expanded notion of the corporate university (CU; Phillips, 1999). The CU of the future, though, is conceptualized as a process, not a place, where all levels of employees, customers, and suppliers participate in a variety of learning experiences to improve performance and enhance organizational impact (Phillips, 1999). Finally, Walton (1999) focuses on how HRD can play a role in creating synergy among and between subsystems of an organization as well as between organizations in globalization strategies (including global sourcing, training, team building, mentoring, career development, learning systems, and culture-work).

The State of OD (Mid-1990s–Current). In OD, we see an increased focus on organizational transformation or second-order change, which Levy & Merry (1986) define as a “multi-dimensional, multi-level, qualitative, discontinuous, radical organizational change involving a paradigmatic shift” (p. 5). This focus on facilitating massive and sometimes revolutionary change is a departure from OD’s traditional evolutionary and incremental approaches. The need for this kind of change has also ignited the emergence of multiple methodologies for (a) whole systems change and interventions (Dannemiller Tyson Associates, 2000; Weisbord, 1992) as well as (b) visioning, future search (Weisbord, 1992), and scenario planning (Van der Heijden, 1997), which are designed to help organizations look

to the future in a more agile way and learn and act differently as a result.

There are increased calls for OD to be increasingly “inter”—that is, working in between persons, organizations, and cultures (Burke, 1997)—and this “inter-focus” has spurred a renewed emphasis on diversity, especially across cultural boundaries as well as occupational communities (Schein, 1997). Transorganizational development has also begun to emerge as OD professionals develop methodologies aimed at helping organizations develop collective and collaborative strategies with other organizations (Cummings & Worley, 2001). In addition, organizational learning is increasingly emphasized as OD focuses on collective learning and organizational growth. Schein (1997) speculates that we’ll see “even more blending of systems thinking, cognitive psychology, and organization development approaches under one label, probably the ‘learning’ label” (p. 17) and predicts that “OD as a distinctive field of interventions based on behavioral science concepts with a humanistic overtone will increasingly become blended with the broader field of organizational learning and will develop broader concepts and methods” (p. 18).

Strategically Proactive Period Analysis. The shape of this period is emerging even while this article is written. It is clear that what is beginning to characterize this period is HRM, HRD, and OD needing to be extremely attuned and responsive to the external climate and markets of an organization. Rather than simply reacting to the external climate along with organizational stakeholders, these emerging professions will need to be out scouting it and anticipating future trends. In addition, the emphasis for a strategically proactive role must be on integrated, systemic interventions that develop and leverage an adaptable, agile workforce. The key to an agile workforce seems to be a genuine focus on learning at the individual, group, and organizational levels and the development of holistic organizational systems that translate learning into unique and strategic core organizational competencies.

All of these trends suggest the need for HR professionals to have an expanded base of knowledge in business and the ability to

integrate HR knowledge to create business alternatives. They must demonstrate mastery not only of their specialized (HRM, HRD, and OD) practices, but, most importantly, how they fit together. They must also possess broader business knowledge and skills including a working knowledge of other business units, a fundamental understanding of an organization's core business, its environment and competition, value creation, and strategy (Magretta, 2002).

An Analysis of These Evolutions: Convergence toward Collective Futures

It is clear that HRM, HRD, and OD have “grown up” as distinctive fields in their own right, and yet it is vitally important to understand this growth in context and not underestimate the similarities and interdependencies that have emerged between the fields during the past 40-plus years. A “snapshot” look at these evolutions is provided in Figure 3 to summarize the historical review presented in this article and highlight the changing nature of work in each field during the past 50-plus years. The unfolding of key trends in HRM, HRD, and OD provided in this article draws out four major themes that indicate a clear convergence and the birth of a new twenty-first-century HR:

- Increased centrality of people to organizational success;
- Focus on whole systems and integrated solutions;
- Strategic alignment and impact; and
- Capacity for change.

These areas of convergence are described below.

Increased Centrality of People to Organizational Success

Undoubtedly the most powerful force affecting these three fields is the increased centrality of people to organizational success (Brockbank, 1999). The emergence of resource-based views of organizations (Barney, 2001; Wright et al., 2001) has placed increasing importance on the intellectual and

social capital (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998) underlying an organization's core competencies. This has been a key force driving the demand for and growth of HRM, HRD, and OD. Organizational leaders are finally tuning into the idea that people are vitally important in the execution of their strategic intent.

Focus on Whole Systems and Integrated Solutions

It is clear that these three fields have become increasingly systemic during their evolutions. Each has recognized the need for a systems perspective and responded with increasingly comprehensive, integrated, coordinated, and dynamic approaches. By definition, this has almost required that HRM, HRD, and OD integrate their efforts. This enhanced systems perspective is also the most viable explanation as to why the distinctions between these fields seem to be blurring and the “new” HR has emerged. Given the pull toward a strategically proactive role, the challenge for HRM, HRD, and OD is to continue to develop innovative systems that

create a synergistic effect rather than develop a set of independent best practices ... where independent sub-functions (of the organization) are viewed as *interrelated* components of a highly *interdependent* system. The interrelatedness of these systems components makes the advantage difficult, if not impossible, for competitors to identify and copy. (Barney & Wright, 2001, p. 40)

Strategic Alignment and Impact

Organizational leaders began evaluating the contributions of HRM, HRD, and OD during the late 1970s, and continued that call throughout the 1980s and early 1990s as they emphasized strategic alignment. The focus is now on producing real strategic impact—that is, processes and interventions that are aligned with both planned and emergent strategy and that provide clear, concrete, and qualifiable value. Indeed, in most cases, the results must be *quantifiable*. Each field has had to tackle the challenge of creating metrics that effectively demonstrate their contributions. Most of

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the actual responsibility for those indicators is shared between HRM, HRD, and OD in many organizations today. Twenty-first century HR has become more integrated by its measurement efforts, and it is expected that the importance of these efforts will only increase in the coming years. This is all being driven by increased pressure to work on issues that are most important to the business and to provide organizational leaders with understandable information that helps them to make better and more strategic decisions about the workforce. Ultimately, we must work together to enhance HR's capacity to contribute to organizational and financial performance.

Capacity for Change

It is also clear from this analysis that there has been an increased focus on enhancing an organization's capacity for change. Today's organizations must thrive in complex and unpredictable environments and must be extremely agile. This demands the development and implementation of structures and processes that facilitate incremental, and, in many cases, transformational change. It has also meant an increasing focus on organizational culture as a central factor that facilitates or inhibits an organization's capacity for change. Change and culture simply cannot be effectively addressed by solutions proposed from HRM, HRD, and OD that are not integrating their best contributions in new and innovative ways.

Implications for HR of the Twenty-First Century

One of the important lessons gained from this analysis of the evolutions of HRM, HRD, and OD is that these fields must consider how they are interrelated and how, together, they comprise the HR of the twenty-first century. This section outlines key implications for the fields, organizations, and individual practitioners. It also surfaces several themes that threaten the future viability of twenty-first-century HR that should be managed as we move forward as a united force.

Implications for the Professions

It is simply no longer viable to insist that these three fields are as distinct as they once were. Indeed, Brockbank & Ulrich (2003) found in their study of HR competencies that "HR professionals in high-performing firms actively translate (business) knowledge in contributing to strategic decision making, developing competitive cultures, making change happen, and creating market-driven connectivity" (p. 6). Their findings affirm our analysis of the historical evolutions of these fields. There is great synergy between these fields and it must be tapped even more strongly as we aim to significantly contribute to organizational strategy and results.

For us, this leaves little question about how the future will unfold and places a great onus on each of the fields to unite under a common umbrella. The term *human resources* or *HR* has commonly been associated with the field of HRM; however, it could be redefined to serve as a unifier for professionals in HRM, HRD, and OD while also encouraging the growth and professionalization of each of the three fields. Or perhaps this new hybrid will need to be called something else altogether? Many organizations are currently struggling with identifying a new term for this function—one that helps them to "rebrand" and more accurately depict their role and responsibilities. We're hearing terms such as *talent*, *people*, and *workforce* instead of the term *human*. However, none of those terms reflect the kind of process and system work that many in the fields of HRM, HRD, and OD do (e.g., performance consultants, organization development consultants, and strategists). While much of that work certainly involves people, the organizational systems are the primary foci. And, perhaps we'd be better off naming our contributions more explicitly by using the terms *leadership*, *catalysts*, or *partners*? There's no easy answer to this; however, we predict that there will be a new term that emerges during the next ten years to better depict and unify these fields.

Creating the necessary synergy between HRM, HRD, and OD will be challenging. Especially in light of the current societal

context of increased professionalization and specialization (Leicht & Fennell, 2001) that is being driven by the sheer quantity and quality of what must be known within each of the three fields to even achieve “the basics” today. It is not wise for the fields to entirely blur into each other. However, the similarities and differences between them must be consciously explored and made more transparent. Each field must become more conscious of its essential defining qualities, get clearer about its unique contributions around people in organizations, and identify specific areas in which synergy between HRM, HRD, and OD is necessary. We must continue to define and distinguish the more-specialized fields while also creating interdependence, synergy, and pliable boundaries.

How do these fields make this shift? In this endeavor, we must view these fields as the communities that comprise them—and then foster change within them. Professional associations, for instance, can play an extremely powerful role. Our associations, both practitioner and academic, must soften their boundaries and rethink their purposes and the structures/processes that support them. We need more conversation across the fields. We need more professional special interest groups that attract each other to our professional associations. We need to stop discounting the work that we each do or lightly assuming that “those HRM (or HRD or OD) people don’t know what is needed.” Our divisiveness is hurting all of us in the organizations in which we work—and could be our downfall should we not bind together. We need to lay out the welcome mat for each other and create synergies in ways that are yet to be explored.

In academe, we need programs that more effectively integrate the fields—especially since HRD and OD are often housed outside of more traditional business schools. Each field can more clearly identify the specializations inherent in their disciplines, while together working to define a generalist role that encompasses the strategic, systemic, change, culture, and business partnership attributes that are generalizable for all three fields. We also need researchers who inquire into the people and organiza-

tional challenges that organizations face rather than “claiming them” as uniquely addressed by HRM, HRD, or OD. We need to be publishing in each other’s journals and magazines, and tapping each other’s insights more. We need to loosen our tight rein on “turf” and proprietary areas of knowledge and join together to create a knowledge base that will best serve the needs of both the people and the organizations that twenty-first-century HR is committed to serving.

Implications for HR in Organizations

Organizations are facing unprecedented challenges. They are increasingly forced to limit their costs, maximize their returns, and act strategically in an extremely complex, global society. Organizations need *integrated* and *innovative* solutions. The potential impact of HR is maximized by a more formally integrated HRM, HRD, and OD.

We need to tear down whatever walls have been built between these three fields. In many organizations today, these three fields are separated by function, structure, and, often, reporting relationships. This does little to foster integrated solutions and, in our observation, confuses people who work in the organization. Who are they to call for what? When HRM, HRD, and OD are each playing a strategically reactive or proactive role, it will likely look quite similar to the layperson who is, in the end, our mutual client. It also fosters duplication of efforts and, most importantly, it inhibits the development of genuinely integrated people/system solutions that are desperately needed in organizations.

This transition will require an enlightened organizational leadership that is capable of bringing together these three fields. These leaders must embody and exhibit strategically proactive HR. They must be fluent in the core contributions of each field. They must foster cross-fertilization of concepts and competencies, while also nourishing the uniqueness of each. While the structure and process of twenty-first-century HR will be customized to the unique context of the organization, the message that “HR’s all on the same team” must be resounding!

Organizations need integrated and innovative solutions. The potential impact of HR is maximized by a more formally integrated HRM, HRD, and OD.

Our review of the evolutions of these three fields indicates that achievement of the true strategic partner role to which HR aspires requires the integration of the expertise of all three professions and that, without this partnership, this role will continue to remain elusive.

Implications for Practitioners

The competencies listed by each field for its modern professionals are *strikingly* similar. An effective professional in HRM, HRD, and OD is now asked to master the basics as efficiently as possible while also becoming business-savvy, strategic, systemic, and adept at designing systems for change and more agile cultures. Each of the most recent competency studies in the three fields emphasizes these areas quite prominently (see Brockbank & Ulrich, 2003, for HRM; Rothwell, 1999, for HRD; and Sullivan, Rothwell, & Worley, 2001, for OD). It is important to note that the primary competencies for OD and HRD are (and have always been) fundamentally related to facilitating and managing culture and change, which is one of the most emphasized competencies in the recent study of HR competencies (Brockbank & Ulrich, 2003). One could argue (and more than a few have!) that HRM has needed to increasingly tap the foundational theories and practices that OD has spawned in order to fulfill its strategic mandate.

We predict that those professionals involved in the necessary basics of each field (those activities that fall into the operationally reactive and proactive quadrants in Figure 1) will continue to be quite specialized, while those professionals striving towards strategically reactive and proactive roles will continue to converge in their competencies and contributions. If this is true, then the challenge remains for those working in the strategically reactive and proactive roles who will continue to face a paradox of specialization paired with synergy and interdependence.

These trends suggest the need for HR professionals to have a strong, working knowledge of the organization—a fundamental understanding of an organization's core business, environment and competition, value propositions, strategy, and various business units (Magretta, 2002). They must have the ability to integrate HR knowledge to shape and create business alternatives. They must demonstrate the necessary systemic view through their mastery of not only their specialized (HRM, HRD, and OD) practices but, most importantly, how they all *fit* to-

gether. We're going to have to let go of our traditional notion and reverence for the idea of "expert" and instead understand that to "...manage the HR function effectively and also be a trusted advisor to top management, however, you need depth and breadth—you need to become a deep generalist" (Gandossy & Sobel, 2003, p. 288). This will require that HR professionals have some knowledge in each of the areas within HR that are not their specialties. They must integrate the best that we each know on culture and change management. Our review of the evolutions of these three fields indicates that achievement of the true strategic partner role to which HR aspires *requires* the integration of the expertise of all three professions and that, without this partnership, this role will continue to remain elusive.

Potential Divergence?

We see at least three areas that threaten to pull these fields further apart in the future. These must each be managed to ensure the future viability of HR. First, the emphasis of HRM in terms of being strategically proactive may be more external than that of HRD and OD in terms of impacting future business opportunities. According to the most recent Human Resource Competency Study, HR professionals from high-performing companies were integrally involved in "strategically connecting the firm to its external environment" and in creating "structures and processes to enable the organizational parts to complement each other in quickly and collaboratively responding to key opportunities and threats in the market environment" (Brockbank & Ulrich, 2003, p. 4). While all three fields seem to be attuned to the criticality of people in organizations, HRM has begun to talk in their literature about HRM as a strategic core competency of the organization with a distinctively external (versus internal) focus that includes proactively monitoring and shaping the organization's responses to the external environment. We see much less exploration and developed notions of this in HRD and OD.

Second, there is a significant amount of HRM literature that explores what types of configurations work best as related to environ-

ment, market strategy, culture, structure, and HR practices in terms of organizational effectiveness measures (see, for example, Delery & Doty, 1996; Ketchen, Thomas, & Snow, 1993; Meyer, Tsui, & Hinings, 1993; Miller, 1987; Miller & Mintzberg, 1984). OD and HRD have much to contribute here, yet neither has produced a significant major focus in this area.

Third, it is important to note that there is some upheaval in OD about the loss of the humanistic value base that has rooted it for so many years (Church, Burke, & Eynde, 1994). Although there are many professionals in OD who categorize themselves as strong pragmatists and are deeply concerned with strategic alignment and interventions, a review of the competency list endorsed by the Organization Development Network (Sullivan et al., 2001) reveals very little emphasis on strategic alignment or concerns of the business. There seems to be a palatable resistance by some leaders in the field to accept the kinds of strategic roles and responsibilities that HRM and HRD are increasingly embracing. Should the field of OD retrench too strongly into the humanism that roots it, this may be a unique characteristic that differentiates OD professionals from those who identify with HRM and HRD. This may result in a distinct splintering of the OD field, with those professionals who adopt a strategically proactive role finding a home in a new twenty-first-century

HR that welcomes diversity and invites synergy among all those who foster the strategic contribution of people in organizations.

Conclusion

The purpose of this article was to situate the evolutions of HRM, HRD, and OD in a historical and comparative context. To do this, the evolutions were traced from their beginnings in the early to mid-1900s through the dawn of the twenty-first century.

We analyze the past to learn from it. Our histories provide us with great clues of what is to come. Our histories have led us to this moment that demands a more strategic HR. We believe that it is only through synergistic and unified partnerships that the development of twenty-first-century HR will be fostered and that all three fields will continue to grow and achieve their full potential. In the words of Ulrich (1998), if this partnership is achieved, there will be no further need to ask, "Should we do away with HR?" (p. 124), as the strategic impact of HR will be assured. We assert that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts—and that our "parts" must continue to be nurtured to maximize the whole. HRM, HRD, and OD should be encouraged to thrive in their individuality, but not at the great cost of diminishing the whole of HR's value to organizations.

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